

The Northern Sea

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The Northern Sea

by [soltian](#)

Summary

Lost and freezing in the middle of the ocean, Loki encounters an intriguing and dangerous stranger that seems more likely to make things worse rather than better.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The water was still for miles. Loki burrowed deep into his furs and quietly contemplated whether a death by freezing to his boat would be an honorable one. They could write on his grave - "He tried to prove his skill as a fisherman and a hunter like no other; instead he froze to death like a fool - not very original." No one could weave a net like he, nor snare prey from the sea with as much speed and precision, but on this expedition he had become utterly lost. He had set north past waters any of his fellow skiffs would dare sail in search of new sights and trophies never before seen. Long gone were the green hills or braying of cattle close to safety. Here the hills had become mountains and the mountains had become snow-capped and the water had become black and littered with ice. As if being stranded too far out in the ocean to make it back alive wasn't bad enough, there was nothing out in this frozen waste to cut his prowess on.

Just as he was about to shut his eyes for permanent sleep, he caught a flicker of movement on the horizon. Blinking frost out of his lashes, he leaned forward, to make sure he wasn't imagining it. There it was again, closer this time - something living, with bright red scales, flashed briefly past the dark surface before disappearing into the depths once again. Loki felt his heart beat fast enough to put color in his cheeks again. The color alone was remarkable, but the size of it - the fish must be the size of a man, or two, enough to keep his name in stone for all of history. He quickly stood, his bulky furs cutting a nearly square figure in his small boat, and gathered up his net of barbed, jet black twine, and waited for the giant to show itself once more. He saw a ripple in the water and tensed to spring, his eyes wide and hungry. But when the creature surfaced, barely more than a foot away from his boat, what he saw made him momentarily forget the net in his hands.



Human hair, gold as the absent sun, strung with seaweed and studded with pearls hung down over the creature's face and broad shoulders. Loki's first thought was the tavern tales he had heard of maids with the bodies of fish, but when the creature pulled its fringe away from its face to reveal eyes of almost glowing blue, a square jaw, and a beard that dripped seawater down its chest, he could fully appreciate the one essential difference between this stranger and a maiden. His upper body looked completely human, aside from curiously delicate red slashes across the base of his throat, which Loki thought at first were scars, but realized a moment later must be gills. Loki held his breath, struck by both his strangeness and his beauty - amidst the troubling landscape of dark and snowy mountains, an inky sea, and a sky that threatened nightfall at any moment, the man in the water glowed like a hearth. A malicious grin split the water-man's fair face and Loki snapped to his senses as soon as he began reaching a thickly muscled arm towards the boat. Without another moment of hesitation, Loki slung his net, suddenly a hunter once more, determined more than ever to make the ocean dweller his prey.

The first sling caused the man in the water to withdraw his arm and move back several feet. His glowing skin had been stung by several of the barbs, and he now had a stormy furrow to his brow. Loki heard thunder rumble in the distance, but took no notice. He balanced himself perfectly in his sturdy little boat and slung again, in a much wider arc, twisting the tarred twine in front of him as if he could direct it even without touching the net. This time he got a solid catch - his prey had been hesitating, or shocked, and the net wrapped fully around his middle, sinking its teeth in long

enough for Loki to grab fast to both ends of the it, steadying himself for his prey's inevitable thrashing. The thunder grew louder as the man in the water uttered his first sound since surfacing - a guttural, furious grunt of surprise. Loki's net was designed to stretch instead of snap, bite instead of just wrap, and tangle any creature in its poisonous black claws from the smallest minnow to seafolk as large as whales. Although he wasn't drawing any blood (the half-man seemed too thick-skinned for that) his quarry did the decent, predictable thing, and began to struggle. He thrashed and churned the black water, frothing it white and green with his rage until - with one furious glare at Loki, he turned, dove beneath the surface, and started swimming with surprising power using just the strength of his thick red tail. Loki clung to the net like reins, his previously steady boat now being hurtled roughly forward.

What if he dives, was all Loki could think, *I should let go, he could dive at any moment and I'll be dead, what else would he possibly do?* And yet his hands refused to release, the risk of losing his prize was too great. Then, suddenly, a dark cliff face appeared out of the fog and thoughts of the creature diving were immediately driven out by the horrifying split second realization of—

The boat crashed spectacularly, its sides and deck splintering into pieces and its small mast snapping in two, and Loki was down in the water, spluttering, feeling the icy frigidness of it as if he were being burned all over, barely having the presence of mind to cling to the rapidly-sinking stern before he realized that the net was no longer in his hands. The water, which only a moment ago had been roiling with the creature's frenzied rage, was once again still, other than the soft, dreadful sound of the scraps of wood sinking beneath the surface. The silence extended for a few moments as Loki took ragged breaths, each of his limbs losing sensation at an alarming rate now that the ice water was soaking rapidly through his cloak.

"COWARD," he shouted out to the empty sea, "BEAST! At least kill me yourself, you snake! Come back and drown me with your own hand, if you even can!"

There was no response and no sound, and Loki shut his eyes, pressed his forehead to the sinking stern, and shuddered. A few moments that felt like an eternity passed before Loki pried open his near-frozen lids at the sound of a quiet ripple of water nearby. The creature was back, and his hot blue eyes were burning with such fury that Loki thought in near-frozen delusion that he could feel them on his skin. He looked down past the water-man's thick throat and saw that his net was still deeply tangled around his torso and arms, and did not bother to stop himself from laughing.

"Oh, good *girl*, little mermaid! Did you already figure out you need my help with that?"

"You humans and your petty tricks. I had only risen to the surface to *greet* you."

"I'm *certain*. Well, your greeting has quite killed me, I'll either be frozen or drowned in a matter of minutes. Which is terrible news for you, since that enchanted twine will keep getting tighter until it squeezes your organs out through your mouth."

He was bluffing, but he knew that net - it would feel true. He had to exert an enormous effort not to laugh in relief when he saw the creature's eyes widen in horror.

"Remove it, immediately!"

"I would, but my fingers won't be any use if I'm in this water much longer."

"I'll get you to safety." The creature hesitated, then swam closer to Loki, enough so that Loki could touch his net-streaked shoulder if he reached out. "Grab hold of me, and hold your breath. I will use enough speed so that your puny body will not drown and my heat will keep you from freezing."

Loki wanted to protest, but he could feel that heat he was talking about, as if there was a summer's day right beside him in this waste. Besides, if he was to die anyway, the tombstone would read more impressively inscribed with "dragged to the depths by an unfathomable monster of the sea." He first wrapped one slender arm around the man's neck, and then the other, and stifled a whimper of relief when unnatural warmth suddenly soaked into his entire body. He clung tighter, and the mer-man looked over his shoulder to make sure he was properly secured.

"Hold on tightly," he growled before he turned back to face the sea, and then, very suddenly, dove down into it.

It had not been an unwarranted warning. Water rushed past Loki's face and dragged so heavily at his furs that he felt for sure he was going to be flung back to the surface despite his almost desperate cling to his companion's neck and shoulders. After the initial dive, however, the stream became somewhat calmer, and steadily colder, and Loki became more uncomfortably aware, instead, of the lack of air, and a steady burning sensation in his lungs. The thought flickered through his mind, as his water-breathing friend dove yet deeper, that fish folk had no concept of how much air was actually needed to breathe, and this one was about to drown him out of sheer stupidity. Just as he was about to feel too faint to keep his hold, the water started to feel lighter, and then, finally, they broke the surface. Suddenly with air again, he succumbed to several undignified minutes of gasping and coughing. After he had cleared the water from his throat and wiped the salt out of his eyes, he took in his surroundings. They were in a large underground cave, lit by an ambient glow from curious blue orbs set into the floor. The walls extended high into smoky darkness, but he could make out openings to more passages high above their heads. Scattered about in unorganized heaps were items from the surface and the sea alike - ranging from useless bundles of soggy tobacco to what appeared to be a mound of gold and emeralds as tall as a man. The hodge-podge assortment was not comforting - he could only assume that he was now the latest trinket to be stowed away here by his bulky friend. He eyed him warily, and felt a small shock go through his chest when he realized that he was already staring at him, looking intensely displeased.

"You're safe now. It's warm enough here that you won't freeze, and there's air so you can breathe. The net."

Loki scowled, though the warmth he mentioned was becoming blatantly obvious - it seemed to be coming from the walls themselves, making the cave's interior feel almost like spring. He unfastened his cloak, and heaved it ashore before slipping away from the mer-man's shoulders and pulling himself out of the water as well. He sat on the edge, let his feet dangle, and made a show of looking around once more.

"What if I release you, and you drag me out to the sea in revenge? This is your realm...you have all the power here."

He saw a flash of bright blue, and it was difficult to tell whether his eyes were reflecting the ambient light, or simply glowing in fury.

"Cut the twine, and I'll forget it ever happened. You have my word."

"What good is the word of a man whose name I don't even know?" He slid his tongue over his lip, and waited, unsure if a mer-man would know enough about the surface world to suspect he was anything but a humble mortal. His eyes narrowed, but when Loki realized that it was not in suspicion as much as his gaze was focused on his lips, he let his tongue flick out again, slower. The sea creature growled shortly, and shook himself as if to clear the sight out of his mind.

"I am far more than a man. I am a Prince of the Sea, the son of mighty Odin himself, Thor."

Loki sighed in pleasure as he felt the small name spell he had inducted slide down his throat and into his belly. It wasn't enough to grant him any true power, but it was a start. Enough to pay the 'Prince of the Sea' back by cutting the twine free of his pale skin, at least. He drew his damp knife from the holster at his thigh and beckoned casually for Thor to join him on the shore. He glowered, but approached with only a slight hesitation, and Loki studiously got to work finding as few places as possible to slice, running his hands along his chest, back, and arms to find all the points where the net was straining to hold him the most.



"And yours, mortal?" Thor finally asked, through still-grinding teeth, clearly aware that Loki was taking his time on purpose. "What do they call you, other than a nasty—" he hissed, as Loki 'accidentally' nicked him with the knife and gave a mellow shrug as apology "—poisonous little devil?"

"Many things. Thief, cur, silver-tongued, monster, liesmith, lover..." He tugged the net free from Thor's shoulders, and brushed the edges of those curiously soft gills with his long fingertips as he did so. He folded it neatly in his lap before setting it and his knife aside.

"But when people run out of these and more colorful words, they call me Loki."

Thor tested out his now free muscles and Loki lazily took in the way the net had marked him, lashes of red and white very slowly fading as he rubbed seawater back into his skin.

"Loki," Thor said, calling his attention back to his face, "You do realize I'm not accustomed to learning the names of my surface acquaintances, much less bringing one to my private grotto. I hope you intend to repay my hospitality."

Loki licked his lips again, but withdrew his feet from the water, and stepped quickly away from the edge. Thor pulled himself up onto it as if to come after him, but paused after Loki was out of his reach, frowning. As Loki had guessed, he wasn't too eager to make a clumsy fool of himself on land, however impressive he was in the water.

"This is the sea-folk version of hospitality? An empty, dead cave full of trinkets and fish bones? The people on earth whisper astounding tales of a lost city the majesty of which cannot be compared. This...is a bit disappointing." He made a small circle in the center of the cave, as if inspecting it critically, and heard Thor's tail thrash the water once in dissatisfaction.

"It has *air* and *heat*. Two things you begged me for back on the surface. I've done you the overly magnanimous good deed of saving your life, and for that you will repay me." Loki looked over his shoulder expecting to see Thor angry, but raised an eyebrow in surprise when instead he was met with a smug, assured smile. He had his thick arms crossed over his chest and was sitting on the shore, leaning back against a rock, as if expecting Loki to come right back and straddle his scaly lap. Loki couldn't help but smirk.

"I look forward to it, your highness," he said, as he picked through a pile of linen and found them all to be fairly dry, and one of the furs thick enough even to make a bed out of, "but I'm extremely weary from nearly dying twice in one day, so I will have to think of a creative way to thank you in the morning. Bring me food and wood for a fire by then." After he had assembled his makeshift mattress, he finally began to strip free of his soaked traveling clothes, starting with his boots, and ending, with another glance over at Thor as if to reprimand him for watching (which he was, unwavering and unblushing), with his undergarments, sitting in casual nudity well out of Thor's reach as he rubbed his slender frame dry with a robe that was probably worth half a king's crown. Thor rubbed his chin thoughtfully, then slid from his perch back into the water. He took Loki's knife and net in one of his large palms, and turned to leave.

"I'll see you in the morning, fisherman."

Loki leaned forward to be sure Thor's sleek red tail had vanished completely, and listened for any disturbance in the water several minutes after. Hearing nothing, he tucked himself between dry fur and dry linen, and lay on his side with his eyes open before slowly drifting off, hungry for the morning already.

Chapter End Notes

I think that this was originally supposed to be just some filthy indulgent smut, but it got away from me and is currently spinning out of control.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

After a fairly disastrous first meeting, Thor and Loki get to know each other.
Alternatively - Loki finds out just how much Thor is not human at all below the waist.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Loki awoke to the sound of wood on stone. The steady thumping was oddly soothing, and he felt...new. Rejuvenated and utterly rested, as if an invisible burden had been stripped away from him as he slept. His sleep-fogged mind pictured the village port - he listened for the call of gulls and heard none, nor men's voices, nor even the sound of waves. Then, gradually, he began to remember the ocean, the cold, and glistening, golden Thor. He opened his eyes, and was surprised to find the cave bathed in more or less natural sunlight. The smoky darkness of the night before had given way to a circle of dusty yellow pouring in from the daytime sky, as if he were at the bottom of a very large well. Thor was already there, tossing an armful of logs onto an already large pile of wood, all of which was completely soaked in seawater. Loki got sleepily to his feet and tugged the robe he had found last night around him, which, in the sunlight, was green, with swirling patterns of gold.

"I don't actually eat wood, you realize."

Thor snorted as a return greeting, "You'll have your food. Then we'll discuss your debt to me in more detail."

Loki rolled his eyes, but felt a ripple of amusement when he saw that Thor had kept his net - and put it to good use. It was fat with fish, some of which were still twitching, and slung over a rock nearby. Thor was also wearing his knife on a leather strap around his neck. He dove suddenly beneath the surface, and returned a minute later with another armful of wood, which he emptied unceremoniously on top of the wet pile he had already made.

"There. As much good as it will do you."

"Funny, I was about to say the same thing. Do you have some kind of fish magic that will make it useful again?"

"The air in here is good for your kind - it'll be dry fast enough. Your garments might already be."

"But I suppose during breakfast you expect me to settle for nudity and raw fish."

"That is *exactly* what I expect." Thor gave him a grin so bright and assured that it almost disguised its lechery. He drew Loki's knife and swam effortlessly to the net, where he tugged some of the twine open just enough to let a fish squirm free, gutting it as soon as it had it in hand. He lay the tuna in halves on the shore beside Loki's discarded fur cloak, and began cutting strips of the jewel-red meat away from its skin and bones. Loki watched his fingers and the raw fish with a mixture of fascinations, and when Thor held a strip out between his fingers and called him over with nothing but a click of his tongue, he had to give him credit for audacity.

“Just like that?”

“Of course. You’re hungry, aren’t you?”

“Shouldn’t you lay bits on the ground in a trail, to see if I fall for the trap gradually?”

“A trap is a trick. I am being nothing but honest. Come closer, eat, and expect me to grab hold of you once you’ve finished.”

“This is very poor bait to lead me to my doom with, fish man.”

“No one is doomed...and you haven’t even tasted it yet.”

Thor was beginning to look...puzzled. Uncertain. Loki realized that the conversation they were having, though it had seemed completely ordinary to him, must contain strains of Thor’s coercive siren song, which he clearly expected to have rendered Loki his purring slave by now. He weighed the risks of approaching by concentrating for a moment on the name spell he had cast last night. He couldn’t sense any sort of murderous intent from Thor - only a burning curiosity, which, he had to admit, was quite mutual. He took one stiff step forward, as if reluctant, before slowly crossing the cave floor, and seated himself neatly on his fur, just out of reach of Thor’s outstretched hand. He reached forward for the dark strip of fish between his fingers, and smirked, unsurprised, when Thor withdrew it immediately.

“I haven’t snared you.”

Loki considered lying for a moment, but then shrugged.

“Not in the way you’re used to, I suppose. I do find you quite fascinating.”

“I suspected last night that my voice had no effect on you, and there’s no doubting it now. Yet you are not afraid?”

“Perhaps I have no reason to be afraid.”

“Perhaps.”

Thor looked behind Loki suspiciously, as if he expected him to whip a second net out from between the rocks. Loki leaned himself forward, fully in reach of Thor’s arms, held his gaze, and opened his mouth. Thor hesitated, then reached out to carefully lay the strip of fish on his tongue. Loki had to adjust to the strange, slippery texture, but didn’t find it quite as bad as he had expected - in fact, it wasn’t really bad at all. He had always taken fire for granted and cooking as necessary, but strange circumstances had made an explorer out of him before, and it would seem raw fish was actually a quite pleasant revelation. He swallowed, and gave Thor a small smile.

“Do I have to let you feed me every piece, my magnanimous host?”

“If you want to eat, you do,” Thor’s grin crept back and Loki opened his mouth again. This time he closed his teeth around Thor’s fingertips before he could withdraw them, but only for a moment. Thor kept his fingers near Loki’s lips while he swallowed, and Loki let his tongue brush against them, almost light enough to make it seem like an accident. He tasted like seawater, and the texture of his skin made Loki’s skin prickle. He ate the rest of his breakfast more or less platonically, but when Thor started to draw his hand away after the final piece, he took hold of it gently with both of his.

“Tell me, Thor. Have you ever had a mortal lover that came to you of their own free will, or did

you bewitch them all? For someone who calls a net nasty and despises traps, your technique is surprisingly...cheap.”

Thor laughed, and took hold of Loki’s chin between his thumb and forefinger. His other hand crept to Loki’s knee, and his tail waved lazily in the water behind him.

“Mortals are not usually worth more than a bit of cheap fun...but you’re something a little more than mortal, aren’t you, Loki?”

“Not at all. I am simply that one dull land creature that is immune to your charms.”

Thor laughed again, a deep rumble, which thrummed a flush of pleasing, wary anticipation through Loki’s chest and down into his belly. Thor’s hand on his knee began to slip up his naked thigh, and he ran the pad of his thumb over Loki’s lower lip.

“Don’t think for a moment that I’m disappointed. It’s much better sport to be able to coax you into the water willingly - and you’re quite beautiful, for a land-walker. Especially a *man*.”

“I am whatever I choose to be,” Loki purred quietly back. He took hold of Thor’s hair with both hands and felt pearls in his palms, then leaned forward to taste his mouth. It was solid, warm, salty, and Thor began to bite him almost immediately, though it was teasing instead of clumsy, careful instead of bruising. Both of Thor’s hands were on his thighs now, and Loki sighed and relaxed into his grip. As they kissed, Thor dragged him forward in insistent little increments, submerging first his feet, then calves, and lazily winding his warm, heavy torso between Loki’s thighs until they were pressed fully together, both half in the water, Loki’s robe a rumpled mess bunched around his arms and shoulders. As he allowed himself to be dragged down and nearly mounted, Loki began to curiously explore the sleek, corded flesh radiating heat beneath his palms. Thor’s skin felt distinctly inhuman, almost more similar to whale flesh, thick and smooth under his fingers except for little raised scars here and there. He carefully worked one hand over the base of Thor’s throat until he could use his thumb to tease into the ruffled slice of his gill. Thor broke the kiss abruptly with a grunt, and before Loki even had a chance to pull his hand away, he had both his wrists pinned bruisingly to the fur beneath them. Thor’s frown was deep and unamused, Loki put on a slow, innocent smile.

"Oh. Are those off limits?"

"It's been some time since I've had one of your kind. I forget you folk don't possess common decency."

"A thousand apologies. My kind don't have these lovely petals at their throats, so I couldn't help but be curious."

"Keep your hands free of them, or I will bind you down and leave you for the tide."

"Mm." Loki shivered, warmed by the heat in his words as soundly as by the knowledge that they were not true. He kicked his feet forward lazily in the water and wrapped his legs tight around Thor’s waist. His thighs pressed against warm skin and hard scale as he brought their hips together, and he did not have to exaggerate a gasp of pleasure as Thor’s weight and heat rubbed against him. "Please forgive me, your royal highness. I didn’t know any better."

Thor looked down, and then smirked. He let go of Loki’s hands and instead reached below the water to take sure hold of his hips, pulling Loki’s body above the surface to get a better look.

"You’re very well formed," he murmured, a quiet rumble in his voice and a hungry glint in his

teeth as his fingertips caressed the lean, elegant curve of Loki's abdomen and thigh, "And very...eager." Loki bit into his lower lip with small teeth. It had been months since he had had a woman, even longer since he had been fucked, and the long absence of contact had made his sensitivity humiliatingly high.

"Well, you said it yourself...we surface dwellers have no common decency," Loki tried not to stutter, but it was difficult now that Thor looked as if he would just as soon eat him as fuck him, and the thought made his cock twitch and his insides ache. Thor's grin became even more menacing, and he lowered Loki's hips. Loki caught a glimpse of the gills he had been forbidden to touch fluttering before he ducked under the surface as well, and he stifled a yelp of surprise when the cool soft water over his throbbing cock was suddenly replaced by a warm lap from a heavy tongue. Thor pinned Loki's thighs against the bank beneath the water, which forced Loki to cling tightly to it so as not to be dragged off the shore completely. He began licking him in earnest, undistracted and relentless and hot. His tongue was broad and heavy and Loki was already aching for it, his restrained hips twitching toward the earnest attention and pressure. Before he was ready, Thor started to take Loki into his mouth by inches, and at that point Loki could do little but cling to the shore and keen helplessly, pushed to a moment of powerlessness by the rough handling and the steady thrum of Thor's throat rumbling with pleasure over his length. He bucked forward against the iron-strong hands holding him steady until he spilled, white-hot and breathlessly fast. Thor swallowed a few times more before releasing him from his throat, then surfacing with a triumphant splash. Loki was gasping, winded by how fast and hard he had come, and watched dizzily as Thor leaned forward, pressed his lips to the center of Loki's chest, and let his salty seed spill out as he dragged his tongue in a sticky line up to his throat. There he kissed, and bit, and rumbled in his ear in a voice now thick with pleasure.

"That was punishment for hardening so quickly. I had thought you proud, but you strained with desire the moment I pinned you down."

"Ah," Loki panted, getting his voice back, and steadying himself solidly on the shore again, "What a grave, punishable shame of mine. Do you carry the shame of a creature unable to prove virility in the first place?" Thor snorted in his ear, and Loki felt the breath run through him as a shock.

"See for yourself."

He raised enough out of the water that Loki could see past his waist to the glittering mass of red scales that made up his hips and tail. Where before it had been smooth, a gathering of smaller scales had parted generously to allow an impressive length to emerge. It resembled a man's cock very little. It was darkly flushed, impossibly thick at the bottom, which smoothed out up its considerable length into a curved, tapered end. As Loki watched, it flexed slowly, as if reaching toward him on its own. He finally pulled his eyes back to Thor's face, and was unsurprised to meet a smug grin.

"Is that virile enough for you, fisherman?"

"Perhaps...too much so."

"All the better." Thor gave a quiet snarl of satisfaction and reached down to tilt Loki's hips toward himself, but Loki had regained his composure, and grabbed a fistful of Thor's golden hair to yank him back down.

"If you fuck me with that, you will owe me far more than dwelling in this shabby treasure-cave."

"Nonsense. You're *aching* for me. I'm doing you a great service just by touching you."

Quicker than Thor could breathe, Loki had his hand at his throat, his nails suddenly wicked points sunk threateningly into each of his three gills. Thor sputtered, his grip on Loki's hips faltered, and he grabbed fur and slippery rock instead.

"That is irrelevant," Loki purred smoothly, pulling Thor close enough so that he could be the one to speak low in his ear this time, "I can still fight you off, if I choose. If you want me to accept you *lovingly*, promise me my reward."

Thor's breath was short, his throat was growing tense and corded, but he couldn't pull away or pin Loki's hands this time, when Loki's nails could so easily slash through this one weak point in his slippery skin. Loki soaked in the heated glare he earned this time with pleasure and felt Thor's rage throb warmly in the pit of his belly.

"What do you ask?"

"Take me to your home. Take me to the underwater city."

"Impossible—you wouldn't survive—"

"I will take care of that," Loki pressed his hips up languidly towards Thor's cock, allowing just the tip of it to brush between his thighs, "Promise it to me."

Thor breathed heavy and short a few more beats. His hips twitched forward, and Loki hummed his encouragement. Thor resisted, panting, for a few more moments, then growled his response.

"I will take you there."

Loki smiled and released his hold on his gills immediately, sliding his arms instead around Thor's shoulders in a soft embrace. Thor wasted no time in tugging the leather strap free from his neck and binding Loki's wrists tightly together behind his head. Loki gave him a wide-eyed, piteous look, but did not struggle.

"Horrible, slippery creature," Thor snarled. Loki showed all his little white teeth when he grinned in response.

"*Yes*," he breathed in anticipation, as he quickly incited a useful little spell he had invented for times where haste overrode preparation, and made himself as slick and ready as he was hot and wanting. Thor's pointed cock was teasing his opening already, and he took hold of Loki's thighs and spread them wide, his shoulders heaving as he looked down at their near-coupled hips, drinking it in. Loki pressed forward impatiently, and Thor pinned him again with a growl, then interrupted Loki's breathless burst of laughter by slamming his cock nearly all the way into his body. Loki gasped, instantly winded just from the size of him, his breadth and thickness pulsing him full in moments. He braced himself for more movement, but instead Thor stilled, and leaned his considerable weight against him as his breathing became incrementally harder. For a few moments Loki wondered if something was wrong, then his eyes widened in shock - Thor's cock was moving into him all on its own, its pointed tip crawling and gripping deep into his insides as the entire thick length of it twisted and filled him in a heavy, intoxicating thrash. It forced him open in ways he hadn't known were possible - the tip of it began to bend when it reached the limit of what his body could hold, and Loki felt tears spring to his eyes when it turned to the side and anchored itself tightly. Only then was Thor deep enough inside of him to rest his scaly hips against Loki's shivering thighs.

"*Mmm—*," Loki whimpered quietly, and Thor answered with a rumble that made his shivering worse.

"*That's* more like it...your nasty sneer is gone - and you're prettier distracted."

"Give me a moment...I'm sure I can sneer at least once," Loki choked out in response, though coherent words left him again when Thor ground his hips down in a slow, lazy circle, and his cock followed the motion even more heavily inside him. "*Ngh...*"

"Pretty thing," Thor repeated, and Loki clawed into his spine with his tightly bound hands and tried not to whimper too desperately. Only a moment of stillness passed before Thor ground his hips again, and Loki mewled softly. His dilated eyes focused down in the direction of Thor's cock seated gut-deep inside of him, trying and failing to comprehend the shape, the *size* of it. Without further hesitation, Thor sunk his teeth into Loki's straining throat, and thrust forward in earnest. It was all Loki could do not to cry out, all of his normally layered, ticking, razor-quick thoughts thrust out entirely by *heavy* and *thick* and *hot* and *full*. Thor's cock stayed anchored where his tip had burrowed into him, and as he thrust his length seemed to ripple as well as grind and fill Loki's insides tighter with each movement. Loki's mouth flowed over with spit, and he gasped out Thor's name thoughtlessly, and Thor released his bite on his pulsing throat to pull on a fistful of his inky hair and expose the pale length of it riddled with bright red marks.

"Eager," he heard Thor growl, "I'm surprised to find you so very *hungry*." With a broken cry Loki felt his own swollen cock spill over again, but it didn't slow Thor down in the slightest, if anything it made his teeth sharper, his thrusts heavier, and his voice more rough. When he spoke again it wasn't a tongue Loki could understand even if he had had his full mind to work with, nor was it a pretty language - it was all harsh hisses and throaty growls, and Loki's caught shaky glimpses of Thor's gills opening and closing to make them. Thor buried himself as deep into Loki as he could and put his face to Loki's marked throat as he came, in no small amount, so far inside of him that the surging, steamy liquid was almost painful, and Loki bleated out a small, wordless plea for mercy. Thor took several minutes to finish, and Loki's pulse didn't calm and his breath didn't come back to him. Dizzily, he pictured just how full he was now, almost as much of Thor's come as of his cock. Just when he was starting to become marginally steady, Thor shook himself, still seated and anchored fully inside of him, and surged forward to push them both ashore, which pressed his weight almost unbearably on top of him. Loki let out a winded sob, and mouthed another wordless plea, his bound arms useless to fend him off, his wet feet barely able to find purchase on Thor's slippery scales.

"Ah...what was that, Loki? You want me to go again?"

"Ag-ain...? *No...*"

"I could, easily, with you squirming as sweetly as you are. If you want me to dislodge, lie still."

Loki let out a weak hiss of anger, but his glare was muddled. He forced himself into stillness, and closed his eyes, trying desperately to get his breath back. Thor began planting warm kisses on Loki's steaming face, shivering shoulders, and sticky chest, lazily swiping up a bit of the come he had left there earlier as he waited. Eventually the heavy pressure from Thor's anchored tip released, and Loki let out a final gasp as the length and thickness of him finally slid out, trailing a considerable amount of his frothing come as he did. Thor unhooked his bound hands from around his head without unbinding them, and lay beside him lazily with narrow, satisfied eyes. Loki let his hands rest where they had fallen ungracefully on his flushed, sticky abdomen and took deep breaths, his nerves hyper-aware of how ravaged and raw and utterly well-served he felt. Once he could speak and control his face again, he turned to look at Thor, with a slow, exhausted, knowing smile.

"Now that you've used me, are you considering between dashing my brains out and drowning me?"

Thor's previously slack posture tensed, and he half-sat up, leaning on one elbow in the fur.

"Is that what you think?"

"Think? That's what I know. If I had not lashed you in my net, you would have taken me from my boat, used me as you just did, and left me to die, whether or not you had the courage to end me yourself."

Thor thrashed his tail in the water, and Loki found it uncannily similar to a petulant boy scuffing his feet.

"Perhaps...if you had been anything but what you are. I wouldn't now. It would be a terrible waste to kill you after one fuck."

Loki raised an eyebrow, and held back the opinion that he felt like a schoolteacher chastising a student that had misbehaved. Instead, he brought back his concentration to the name spell, and nodded his agreement, his chest warm with Thor's honesty.

"You wouldn't be able to, in any case. I may not be a sea-born god, but I'm far beyond your power."

Thor smirked, and relaxed again, this time to reach forward and fit his fingers between Loki's cream-streaked thighs, and massage his still dripping entrance. Loki managed to stifle any sound, but he couldn't help the way his hips jerked from the sudden warm pressure.

"Not too far beyond, I think," Thor purred, and Loki flashed teeth at him in a somewhat nasty grin.

"Then unbind me, powerful overlord."

"I'm not sure..." Thor began to work his teasing fingers into him, and Loki shuddered again, his nerves too over-worked for him to control it, his feet too weak on the slippery stone to squirm away. "With a little more, I feel I could curb this barbed tongue and nasty demeanor of yours." He began to tease Loki's seeping opening with a third finger, and Loki felt a little jolt of panic run through him - he had already been fucked into incoherence once that morning, he had to head this off before it went too far.

"They are curbed," he breathed quickly, clutching Thor's thick forearm with his still-bound hands, "For now. *Please*."

Thor seemed not to heed him, and ground his fingers upwards heavily. In spite of himself Loki whimpered, and his sore cock twitched from the heated jolt to his prostate. But then Thor withdrew, his hand now dripping with stringy come, and smirked.

"I like you like this," he said as he finally unwound the leather from his wrists, "But it *would* be a shame to break you completely. Which reminds me of the promise you so wickedly demanded - I refuse to fulfill it."

Loki was still short of breath, but with his wrists free he felt more relaxed, and sprawled himself on the fur with one arm beneath his head.

"You won't have a choice. No one is able to escape an oath spoken to me. But it's true that the journey there would kill me...which would be a problem. You can wait until I have worked out how to avoid that."

"How very generous," Thor snorted in derision, "But even if you survived the swim, the people of

my city would not allow you to enter. If land walkers are brought in at all, it is for meat.”

“Daunting,” Loki said with a shiver, “But there's always a way to trick unavoidable demise, if you have cleverness and time to...experiment.” He turned lazily hungry eyes on Thor, over the length of his quietly flexing tail, and trying not to linger too long on his softly breathing gills. Thor leveled him a cool look, and sat up.

"I don't like the way you use that word."

"I predict that this is far from the last time you will utter that phrase."

Thor slipped into the water, and Loki sat up to watch him, fully appreciating the warm satisfaction of being well-fucked now that the initial waves of overwhelming breathlessness had passed. Thor swam to the stuffed net, and brought it back to him, not to return it, but to spill a little pile of (still pathetically struggling) fish next to the wood he had left earlier. Loki felt a surprising sense of loss, but didn't let it show in his voice.

"Am I not going to be seeing you for a while?"

"Not until tomorrow - I don't know how much you mortals eat."

"Not *that* much," Loki smirked, relieved that he didn't plan to disappear for a week, "Though I can try. You'll have to leave me my knife, though."

"No," Thor said with a smile, "It's mine now. You might find another and more things of use stowed away in my treasures, but what I've taken from you I intend to keep." He gathered the half-full net over his shoulder, presumably to share with his own, and Loki leaned forward, to ask one more question.

"Thor, can you sing?"

Thor paused, with first a look of a surprise, and then a small smirk tugging at his lips.

"Of course I can."

"Sing for me."

Thor came closer, placed his free hand on Loki's sticky thigh, and with a surge of warmth, pushed out of the water to kiss him. Loki had just managed to put an arm around his shoulder when he had already withdrawn, swimming backwards into the center of the pool.

"Another time, little land witch."

He departed this time by twisting down into the water, giving Loki an indulgent view of the way his muscles from his neck to the tip of his tail flashed in the sunlight before he was gone again.

Alone, Loki took in the quiet, and felt a breath of cool air brush over his bare shoulders. He looked behind him, and saw an opening in the cave that in the darkness had been invisible, leading to a faintly glowing passage, filled with the faint rushing of ocean waters. He pulled his robe from his shoulders, and after a cursory look to be sure there weren't any other sea-creatures lurking, slid into the water. It wouldn't be proper to go exploring this new bit of uncharted land without bathing first.

For perverts like me who think too hard about this stuff, think dolphin, but with magical merman alterations. I promised to be shameless about the smut and did my best to stay true to that.

Also please be sure to check out this [AMAZING DRAWING](#) that for some reason the incredibly talented [Lokisergi](#) thought I deserved to have ngghhhhh asldkfja (warning for dolphin dicks and pools of come and smut so good it'll make your eyes bleed from joy.)

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Thor discovers buried treasure, Loki discovers something else entirely.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

After a day of hunting and sport with his friends, Thor lay on his bed, gazed at the ceiling, and thought. His room glowed a soft gold against the somewhat darkened landscape of dark cliffs and blue sea; the underwater realm of Asgard was a sprawling and layered formation that ranged from high towers that stretched toward the surface to large portions buried beneath coral and sand on the floor of the ocean. Thor made his quarters in one of the higher towers, and his roof was studded with crystal windows that let in the sun's light when she was high in the sky. Many citizens of Asgard preferred the shade, and the ocean's consistent temperance, but Thor felt more at peace if he could keep an eye on the distant clouds once in a while, and have an idea of the passing of days, storms, and seasons above.

Odin, the eldest of the sea-gods, said Asgard had grown out of the earth as a living thing, and its citizens were all part of Asgard's beating heart, separate but in spirit one entity. The city and her people were gifted with eternal life from Idunn's treasured orchard in the center of the city, protected day and night by their finest warriors. Odin was the most highly regarded prince of Asgard - second in succession as Thor was third, the trusted adviser and sworn brother to Aegir, their king. Aegir was much loved, but he was more skilled at the arts of feasting and brewing mead than diplomacy or defense, so it was Odin's strength and magic that kept Asgard healthy, and protected her from those who wished to cause her harm. When he was a boy, Thor had once tried to ask his father why he was not king instead, and received only a cold, one-eyed stare in reply.

Today, Thor had taken Loki's net hunting, and found it outshone anything he had ever wielded before, astonishing Fandral and even getting a grim smoulder of jealousy out of Hogun when it turned out that he had bested him for once in his favorite game of snaring and weighing sharks. (The sharks did not seem to mind too terribly, since they did this often and always released them afterwards - in fact, Thor suspected some of them actually enjoyed being caught.) Volstagg might have cried a few tears of joy when the day was done and he got a good look at all the fish he had caught ("There are types here I've never tasted before!"). Sif, of course, had narrowed her eyes and hit him in the face with her tail when he had cheekily asked whether she was impressed, too. He held the net up in front of his face and pulled - gently at first, and then gradually harder, until he was almost using his full strength to strain the tarred and blackened twine. When it seemed almost about to snap, he felt it twitch in his hands, and he dropped it with a quiet yelp, where it lay across his lap, soft again like black thread, deviously innocent. What an weapon! As useful as it had been, he could tell that Sif was right - it was wicked, and he was not using it to its full potential besides. Only Loki could do that, it was his, after all. This only made him feel better about being snared by it the previous night. At least only Loki would ever know about it, and such a weapon wielded by its master's hands was nothing to feel too ashamed of falling prey to. Even if Loki was just a mortal sorcerer. A beautiful one. Beautiful and strange, from his well-formed yet unmanly body to his sharp and pretty face to his eyes, which had seemed green at first, but when they were close enough to kiss Thor could see a ring of bright red clinging to his pupils. He had been so bold the

night before, facing him head on as if they were equals - and he was immune to his voice! It made the pit of Thor's belly hot and his chest tight. Loki was new and unexpected, and Thor had been starving for new and unexpected for more than four hundred years. He folded his dangerous net and tucked it away in the chest he kept close to his bed, just as a knock sounded on his door.

"A message from your father, highness," the servant on the other side spoke out without waiting for his response. "He bids you meet him just outside of the catacombs."

Miffed at his father for the curt instructions he must have dictated, Thor was nonetheless quite curious. Odin guarded the catacombs quite jealously, against any common folk and often his own family as well - even Thor and his younger brother Balder were not permitted near them ordinarily, only Odin and his wife, Frigga.

"I will meet him at once," Thor replied, and did not wait for the servant to acknowledge him before exiting his chamber through the open bay window. He dove alongside his high tower and circled around through a hidden hole in the reef once he reached what appeared at first glance to be the ocean floor. The entrance to the catacombs was a tunnel in the rock directly below the castle; a smoky hole that looked like very little from a distance, but led to an intricate maze that ran under every floor in Asgard. Perfect for spying, Thor had always thought, which is why he suspected that Odin had always kept it to himself. Odin was waiting for him at the entrance, his glinting eye-patch a chip of gold that almost perfectly matched the color of his sleek, sharply-finned tail. He was, for once, smiling, and Thor found himself breaking into a grin in return.

"It's good to see you looking so well, Father - your message sounded quite urgent, so I was concerned."

"It is urgent, Thor, but not a reason for concern. Come, follow."

Odin pulled a blue lantern from the ocean floor, and began an unhurried descent into the tunnel. Curiosity now more piqued than ever, Thor picked up one of the glowing blue stones as well, and followed at somewhat more eager a pace. Despite his impulsive need to pepper his stoic father with questions about what he had found, he managed to stay silent, and instead just concentrated on staying close in the twisting, claustrophobic, almost pitch-black curves of the catacombs.

There's a second reason to discourage loved ones from coming in here, Thor thought with a suddenly more patient understanding, If I were lost in here, no amount of strength or shouting would save me from starving to death.

Just as he was about to ask how much further they had to go, the narrow tunnel finally opened up, and they were in a dimly lit sphere-shaped chamber. Odin had clearly been digging it himself for some time - there was a pick and shovel at the bottom of it, right next to something else half-buried in the bedrock. As they swam towards the floor, Thor began to hear a woman's voice, softly whispering without language, but with a desire that pulled on him and drew him closer by the chest. The buried treasure itself seemed to be speaking - and Thor held his light up to it to examine it closer.

It was a war hammer, inscribed intricately with runes in several different languages, and made of a metal that shone dull on the surface, but if he peered into the cracks the carvings made he could see glints of light twinkling within, as if the inside of the weapon was made from a piece of the night sky. Its handle, which was somewhat too short for a proper war hammer, was wrapped in leather and laid finely with mother of pearl, and although his palm itched to reach out and take hold of it at once, he looked over his shoulder to Odin, who was observing his son's eager examination in silence.

“She’s beautiful,” was all Thor could think to say, “Did you really bring me here to claim her?” His wonder increased when Odin, again, showed just the hint of a smile.

“I did. She is called Mjolnir, and I have been searching for her for some time. There may be other secrets down here that I have yet to discover, but this is my first great success. I believe she has been waiting for you.”

Thor continued marveling over Mjolnir for a moment, and the patches of night sky that seemed to shine through her. Her softly whispering voice seemed to finally be forming words in the language of the sea, and he shivered to hear his name purred so lovingly. He reached out this time to take her, but Odin put a firm hand on his shoulder to make him pause.

“Take the hammer, keep it, and use it, and she will be yours without contest, and always return to your hand when you call. But you must not let others in Asgard touch or handle her until she is fully bound to you - I wish there to be no confusion of ownership, which is why I brought you down here to carry her out yourself.”

“Why is that so important?” Thor asked, though in at least one way he already understood - she was his, she was calling for him, and of course he would let no other near her if he could help it. It was not usually his father’s nature to agree with him on matters of selfish and petty possession.

“The untainted bond between you and this hammer are vital to Asgard’s future.”

That was more like his father - vague and unhelpful. He nodded his understanding anyway, and Odin released his grip on his shoulder so Thor could close his palm around Mjolnir’s handle. It burned warm and pulsed once under his palm before it relented and felt like ordinary leather and pearl. He lifted it and ran his fingertips over the engraved edges of the hammer head, and blue sparks drew soft and harmless from his fingertips when he did. Odin looked satisfied, and picked up Thor’s abandoned torch before gesturing for his son to follow him back out of the catacombs.

“Be sure to master her thoroughly,” Odin cautioned, “She may be yours, but she has a mind of her own.”

After bathing sweat, grime, and more seed than he cared to quantify off in the pool and down a stream that flowed into another dark cave, Loki found that his clothing was most certainly not ready to wear yet. He hung his tunic, leggings, and fur cape (which was somewhat sticky, he noticed with a wince) over a half-broken chest of drawers so that they could dry properly, and instead rummaged around in Thor's pile of linen until he found something else to wear. What he found was an odd combination of an extremely fine silk tunic, shabby sailor's trousers that needed a belt keep them above his slim hips, and a pair of worn but durable black leather boots with silver buckles carved into the rough likenesses of serpents. He took some leather lacing from a molding and otherwise useless corset to tie his damp hair back at the nape of his neck, and faced the soft breeze near the back of the cave with cautious curiosity. Littered around his feet were the smooth blue stones he had noticed the night before. They glowed strongly but were cool to the touch, so he picked one up to take exploring.

His footsteps echoed in the high-walled cavern at first, but as he walked the sound of moving water began to increase, and eventually the passage turned so that he was facing a wide stream. To his left, the stream became wider and rowdier - to his right, it became thinner and slower. He took a deep breath to smell the air, and to feel the direction of the wind on his skin, and chose to follow the stronger current. There was more light in this direction, bluish-white like winter daylight, but the rocks he was walking on became slippery, and he had to take care not to fall and accidentally

set foot in the river; the last thing he needed was to be swept downstream and somehow drowned in a cave at the bottom of the ocean. As he walked the air grew chillier, and his breath became visible in front of him, but he moved onward, following the soft curves of the tunnel and keeping his eyes on his feet. As graceful as he was he nearly slipped twice, and had to pause and cling to wet rock to regain his footing. Up ahead he could see the tunnel begin to widen, but also come to an abrupt end; the river he was walking alongside vanished suddenly over a direct drop downward. There was enough space now for him to sit next to the rushing current, so he knelt and peered over the edge to see what he had found.

He was high above what appeared to be a very similar cavern to the one that Thor had brought him to - this one also had a pool of water at the floor of it and dry land beside, but unlike Thor's that was warm, small and cluttered, this one was cold, empty, and enormous. It was also deafening - the sound of rushing water roared from at least a dozen channels exactly like the one Loki sat in, all on the northern wall of the cavern, falling southwards to flow back into the sea. He could see many such holes all around the walls of the giant tower of a cavern, some of which were completely round, others more jagged gashes that looked like they had been ripped out of this odd underwater mountain that really, more than anything, resembled a hive for termites the size of belugas. When Loki looked down to the floor again, this time he saw movement - something was swimming in the water down on the floor. He leaned over further, trying to get a better look in the dusty blue light shining from the cracked ceiling above. A slow rumbling began to sound, the rhythm deeper and more rumbling than the rushing of the water nearby, and the ground itself began to shake. Then it surfaced.

The first thing Loki saw was its color - bright green, like the freshest spring leaf, streaking and rolling through the water like an enormous tree vine. Coil after coil of it emerged, and it was impossible to discern whether it was one body or many as it turned the water in all directions into foam. Then the head surfaced, and Loki wasn't sure whether terror or delight hit him more. It was a serpent, giant beyond belief, and though it opened its jaw wide to expose bright yellow fangs, it eerily produced no sound. It had four eyes, two of which were green like its body, and two larger ones that were bulging and blood red. Apparently done with its thrashing, it began uncoiling itself calmly and rapidly around the base of its round chamber, and as it ascended it pressed its nose against each of the empty holes it passed, clearly searching for something on its way up. Loki was not about to wait crouched in a tunnel the size of the beasts' head to find out what it would do if it found him, so with as much care and speed as possible he slipped back towards the direction he came. The sound of the serpent's body was thrumming through the entire passage, as coil upon coil wound upward to bring the searching head higher and higher. Loki turned his back to the approaching serpent and did his best to keep his footing as he rushed on, trapped between the terrifying prospect of the monster catching him from behind at any second or slipping into the river and being swept right into its jaws anyway. He was almost to the wider, dry bank when he heard an otherworldly screech from the tunnel behind him, and when he looked back the water level began to rise, the flow of it churning and nearly turning backwards in its agitation. Loki knew he couldn't make it back to Thor's cave in time, so he dove into a crook in the wall that he hoped would lead to a deeper passage, but cursed when he hit a dead end almost immediately, and now with no time left to turn back and look for another place to hide. He muttered as many spells that came to mind to mask his scent, his heat, and his visibility, and the water just past his nook churned as if it were boiling, and judging by the steam coming off of it, it might have been.

Then the water calmed, and an enormous acid-green snout slid slowly into view, its wide nostrils flaring above long trailing whiskers that dragged in the water. Loki held his breath; he hadn't had time for a spell that could make him inaudible. The creature's four eyes moved back and forth, and a red tongue slid out from between its teeth to taste the air, the water, and the rocks. It breathed in several more times, and then one of its red eyes focused on Loki directly. Its slit pupil seeming to

see him for a moment before it blinked, unfocused, and with a rumbling groan drew back from the tunnel and vanished down and away. Its mouth seeped golden liquid as it went, and despite his lingering and chest-numbing fear, Loki felt a pang of regret that the current quickly washed it all away - such a poison would probably be priceless if he could bottle it.

Once the tunnel had been quiet for the better part of an hour, Loki allowed himself to breathe normally again, and looked around the small alcove he had crammed himself into. Sunlight poured in from directly above, closer here than it was in Thor's cavern, and when he looked directly up he could see a patch of open blue sky. It was narrow enough that he could press his hands to each side of the passage. His heart was still pounding and he was not quite certain that returning to Thor's cave was safe yet, so he set his mind to climbing. After close to an hour of mud-slicked toil, he started to feel bitter cold blowing in from above, and was able to reach over the edge of the vertical tunnel and pull himself above it and into the open air.

All he could see was the ocean. He was at the top of a rock formation that jutted like a chimney from the sea, but there was no sign of real land anywhere. There was another, larger tower of rock some distance south, which he guessed must be the serpent's tower, but other than that, cold blue water and cold blue sky in every direction. There wasn't any hint of his poor little boat, which was not much surprise; after Thor had dragged him from it, it must have sunk in a matter of minutes. Examining the landscape once more, Loki sighed in resignation. Unless he could somehow build a new one and then survive the sheer drop from his towering vantage point back into the ocean, the only way to escape the cave on his own would be to become a bird or a fish.

Luckily, such things are sometimes an option, Loki thought to himself with a grim smirk. He shivered as the wind picked up again, and with one final look at the sky, he ducked gratefully back into the cover of stone.

By the time he returned to Thor's cave, night had fallen, and he was exhausted, sore, and filthy. As he approached the glowing blue entrance that meant he had finally returned to presumed safety, he heard a rumbling not unsimilar to the one that the serpent had made in its thrashing earlier. Fear gripped him for a moment, but then he realized that Thor had returned in his absence.

"Fisherman! Witch! Where are you? *Loki!*"

Loki had to press a hand to his mouth and suppress a snigger. He sounded...worried. Angry, but mostly agitated. The thought should not have been endearing as it was. Loki re-tied his hair at least, and brushed the worst of the mud off of his clothes before entering the cave to soothe the poor mer-creature's frayed nerves.

"Here. Here, brute. Stop your shouting before you bring the cave down on your head."

Thor turned in the water to see him, his blue eyes wide with fear before his brows lowered and his face became stormy with pure irritation instead.

"And where were you when I called the first time?"

"In the southern isles, sunning myself. I was exploring, you water-logged oaf. It's a very large cave, if you have legs."

Thor looked around the cave as if really seeing it for the first time - and it occurred to Loki that perhaps Thor looked upon land as he had always looked upon the depths of the ocean - fascinating, perhaps beautiful, but quite untraversable, with mysteries and wonder he could not survive the attempt of discovering. He also found that he was starving, and eager to have a meal that was properly cooked this time, so he walked over to the firewood Thor had brought him that morning

and began picking out some of the drier logs and branches. Thor had calmed significantly now that he had Loki in his sights, and lay belly-down on the bank with his hips still in the water, and smiled as he watched him.

“So, you were exploring. Will you tell me what you discovered?”

“A sea serpent the size of my entire village, or larger. I managed not to be eaten by it.”

“That's very good, I would not stand for it if you were eaten by a creature other than myself.”

“You do not seem surprised. Did it not occur to you to warn me?”

“I am a little surprised...I did not realize that there was any passage between this cave and Jormungandr's prison. You have nothing to fear, Loki. He has been in deep hibernation since my father trapped him - he hasn't eaten a meal in a thousand years.”

Loki raised an eyebrow slowly, but decided not to correct Thor's delusion, at least for the moment. The creature he had met was certainly not in hibernation, but it was true that he hadn't harmed him, either. For a moment he pictured that blood-red eye, looking right at him, and passing him by. He let the thought go for now, and set about fixing himself a fire, close enough that he could share it with Thor, if he had any use for it. This seemed to please Thor immensely - he watched the flames grow with an eagerly fascinated smile, and Loki found his mouth quirking when he realized what a novelty something as simple as flame must be to someone who spent their whole life submerged in water. Soon Loki had two of the (now very dead) fish cooking over a makeshift spit, and had filled a goblet of fine gold with seawater so that he could set to work using spellwork to remove the salt and make it into something drinkable.

“My father has found me quite a treasure today. I'm forbidden from sharing it with my subjects, but as you are a mere mortal and not of the sea, I see no harm in showing it you.”

Loki paused in the work he was doing with his water, his interest piqued since it was clear that this was exactly what Thor came to talk to him about in the first place - he was practically wriggling in excitement.

“Of course there's no harm in it. Is it a gem of some kind?”

“Far better than any gem. Here.” Thor raised his hip out of the water, and Loki noticed he had a strong leather belt strapped to his waist that hadn't been there before, from which he unbuckled the short handle of a dark iron war-hammer. Its appearance was somewhat unremarkable at first glance, but once the hammer was out of the water and in the dry air, Loki could feel an almost pounding magical presence emitting from it, the intensity of which engulfed him for a moment in silent, wide-eyed wonder.

“She is called Mjolnir,” Thor pronounced with beaming pride as he ran his fingertips over the hammer's smooth, square head. “She is the strongest weapon ever known to this realm, and will be my partner from this day forward.” Loki had to contain himself. Thor obviously had some idea of how fine and powerful an object it was he had in his hand, but it was making him almost dizzy with desire just to look at it. Mjolnir made the air thicker and heavier around her, and the distant thunder he had heard when he first met Thor sounded in his ears again as if in time with his heartbeat.

“May I hold it?” Loki asked, trying and failing to sound casual as his fingers itched. Thor smirked infuriatingly, and lowered the hammer below the surface of the water again to re-strap it to his belt. The air stopped pulsing, and Loki's face went surly.

“You like her even better than I thought you would. No, you may not hold it. You know a good deal about magic, don’t you, Loki?”

Loki’s scowl deepened, irritated that his desire had been made so grossly transparent, and paid his mind back to removing the salt from his water.

“Enough to know that such a treasure is wasted on someone who would call it a mere weapon. Any true sorcerer would give half their limbs for it, because with the hammer’s help they could grow them right back.”

Thor laughed in delight, and leaned forward eagerly towards Loki and his fire.

“Good, then you will tell me everything I need to know so that I can use Mjolnir to her full potential. It seems that you will make yourself useful in more ways than just one.”

Loki took a sip of his distilled water and made a face at the acrid taste. “Flattering as it may be to be learn that I have a use other than plaything, It is you who are in my debt, not the other way around. If you wish to learn more about that hammer, leave it here with me to study while you come up with a way to help me travel to the underwater city.”

Thor’s grin vanished, and his hands tightened into fists on the stone.

“What sort of fool do you take me for? You would steal it, and run off.”

It was Loki’s turn to laugh, a spiteful bark as he gestured to the empty air of the cave.

“To where, prince of the frozen swamp? If there was anywhere to run to, I would have found it by noon. I may be a witch, but I cannot swim an ocean or fly.”

“If I left Mjolnir in your care, you might find a way.” Thor sounded mutinous, and his tail thrashed the water in the motion that Loki was beginning to recognize as uncomfortable petulance. Even so, it was true. The ability to fly might just be devised in the relic Thor was currently strapped to, but Loki was not about to admit that, and instead sat in silence as he ate his meal, staring at the fire instead of Thor.

“You shouldn’t misunderstand your position here,” Thor finally rumbled, after watching him quietly for several minutes. “I brought you here as my possession - my prisoner, if that *flatters* you better. Your life is in my hands.”

“My life is in my own hands,” Loki said coldly, and tossed his fish bones into the fire before stoking it. “If you need my help, you will make good on the promises you owe me, and then some.”

“I will not let you touch Mjolnir.”

Loki sighed, as if the pronunciation caused him great pain, which in honesty it did.

“Fine. Then give me some of your scales. You *can* manage that, at least?”

Thor frowned, and Loki stood to be sure he could stay out of his reach if he made any sudden movements.

“What do you need them for?”

Loki gave Thor a hard look, and then crossed his arms over his chest, pronouncing the next two

syllables carefully as if he were speaking to a child.

“Spell-work.”

Thor seemed to be struggling, and Loki half-closed his eyes as he watched him, to feel out the name spell he had cast the previous night. To his frustration and mild alarm, it was no longer in place - Mjolnir's presence seemed to have wiped it clean, and possibly the bindings of Thor's coerced oath, too. No matter. He would get what he was after one way or another.

“No,” Thor finally said, “You may not have any part of me.” Loki smirked, and seated himself on a rock even further from Thor than he had been standing.

“Funny, you didn't seem to mind giving me parts of yourself this morning.”

Thor growled, and Loki saw his eyes trail over the purposeful distance between them, with a fire in the middle to drive the point home. Loki's smirk broadened when he followed Thor's gaze up the form of his thighs, and stretched subtly to let his chest press against his tunic before leaning over and slipping his boot from his sore calf and foot.

“Harlot,” Thor growled, and Loki responded with a soft sigh as he massaged his ankle.

“Mm. I'm deeply sorry you cannot always get what you want, princess. Perhaps if you sing for me it will change my mind.”

“I'll let you starve to death in here, alone.”

“I'm sure you would,” Loki said, with an obscene purr in his voice. “If that were even possible.”

“You will do as you're told.”

“I will do as I please.”

Thunder crackled above them, directly this time, and soon after a flash of lightning flooded the cave in brilliant white before it was gone again. Thor was glaring at him, and Loki held his gaze with his smile never wavering.

“I will let you re-consider your insolence, mortal, and hope that you come to your senses by morning.”

“Yes, of course, your highness. Sweet dreams to you.”

With a look of intense displeasure, Thor returned to the water and vanished without even a ripple. Loki let the fire die down as he washed, changed, and made a more proper bed out of the furs and linens that he had slept on before, and thunder rumbled above the cave all night long.

Chapter End Notes

Boys, boys, you're both pretty. Chapter four is almost ready, and will arrive shortly!
(My illustrations will probably pick up then, too.)

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

In which there are more serpents than Thor is prepared to deal with.

Chapter Notes

The illustration for this chapter is extremely NSFW, so please be careful when scrolling down!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

In the morning, the cave was once again flooded with bright sunlight, but other than the sound of distant running water and the rumbling that might have been Jormungandr in his massive prison, Loki was completely alone. He dressed, and started the day by skinning and cooking all the remaining fish that Thor had left for him, but as the hours went by and there was still no sign of his water-bound jailor, he began to get restless. He looked through all the piles of trash and treasure Thor had collected in hopes of finding something useful or at least entertaining. He found gold, shells, jewelry, dining utensils, old sailcloth and an impressive collection of weaponry that seem to hail from all corners of the world, but he paused on a square chest bound in brown leather and tightly locked with a silver clasp. It did not open when he tried to pick it with the simple knife he had replaced his own with from Thor's treasures, and needles and hairpins were no use, either. He licked the pad of his thumb and ran it over the lock instead, and smirked in a small bit of triumph when he felt a static ripple in response - the chest was locked with a spell. After taking about an hour to unweave it, he pulled it open to reveal a nearly immaculate set of apothecary jars, row upon row of little square slots containing ingredients from the simplest herbs to some he'd never even heard of - moth's lashes, thyme, ground diamond-dust, and most impressively, a jar marked "essence of lava" that glowed hot and bubbled quietly against the surface of the glass. Loki had never made many potions, but it was not for lack of skill - it was lack of ingredients, exactly the type that he now had laid before him here. If there was this chest, he thought, there might be more, and he quickly folded up and re-sealed the box to search the treasure-pile eagerly for similar items. Unfortunately he found little else of intellectual interest, but he did find more suitable clothing and some basic grooming supplies, including a matching comb and mirror handsomely carved with phoenix feathers.

Thor did not return that day, and Loki ate a small supper and went to sleep fighting boredom. He woke to silence again, and gave the still water a bitter look. He felt too pent-up to stay here waiting for Thor to show up, so despite the obvious danger, he decided to further explore the back of the cave. This time he packed a leather sack with one of the glowing blue stones, dried strips of fish, a flask of his distilled water, some bits of charcoal, and a sheet of bark he had managed to pound into a reasonable resemblance of parchment. When he met the same turn that had lead him to Jormungandr's prison, he took the turn upstream instead of down. Here the water became gradually slower and thinner, and the air became hotter and more suffocating. The water vanished entirely, and the tunnel turned sharply left before sloping downward severely. As he descended, the light vanished, and he pulled out his blue stone to see his way. The darkness seemed to go on for miles,

and deadly silence pressed in on his ears and left them ringing - even his footfalls seemed to be swallowed up by the black of the earthy tunnel. He was about to turn back when finally a green glow appeared ahead, though it was filtered through a mist that he had been walking through in the darkness for hours. He couldn't make out what the source was until the tunnel finally opened up, and he was almost on top of it. The first thing he noticed was the brilliant green scales of Jormungandr streaming in through the ceiling. It seemed that the serpent had slid its tail into the tiny round chamber he was now almost scraping his head against the ceiling of, and had curled it in a protective circle around the source of the eerie glow. Eggs, hundreds and hundreds of pulsing, melon-sized eggs were stacked in an unceremonious pile and nearly filled the entire packed chamber.

So, calling Jormungandr a he seems not to be altogether accurate, Loki thought to himself mildly as he looked upon the rather disgusting display. He edged around the chamber, careful to avoid Jormungandr's tail, and crouched next to the nearest green orb. He reached out carefully to feel it. It was soft, almost fleshy, and warm under his palm. Loki could not tell how long the eggs had been here, but judging by the inattentive mess of them, he could only hope Jormungandr would not mourn one missing. He unstrapped the pouch he had brought with him and, cautious not to harm the delicate, somewhat slimy thing, lifted the egg into it. He slung his pouch over his front this time, and took several deep breaths as he waited to see if Jormungandr would react, if he could even notice. There was no sort of response from the heavy, acid green tail - for all he could tell the giant serpent was now deeply asleep, just as Thor believed. He backed silently out of the cave until he could no longer see the green glow of the eggs, and put his hand on the pouch that he had just filled to feel it pulse again under his palm, and counted the beats in his head as he made his way back through the darkness. When he returned to Thor's cave, Thor was, unsurprisingly, still not there. He set the pouch snugly into a nest of linen next to his apothecary set, and with a frustrated sigh, looked around at Thor's other, much more useless treasures. It was a deep shame that the ocean was so unkind to books, and that, in all likelihood, Thor had no interest in them. He felt fairly certain that he already had the knowledge necessary for his task, but working off of just his wits would be...exhausting, time-consuming, and if he were to be perfectly honest with himself, very dangerous. He had more than once nearly lost a finger or a foot to experiments gone somewhat wrong, so he would have to make sure that everything this time went exactly right. His mind lingered for a bitter moment on Mjolnir - if he had a tool with that much power and potential, he would have nothing to worry about - but if Thor was determined to be petulantly absent, all he could do was use what he had until he could hunt the mer-man down himself.

He smirked softly at the warm and glowing egg. At least there was very little mystery here - an egg was an egg, and as long as he could replicate the conditions it enjoyed in the cave with its siblings, he was fairly sure he could hatch it. A child of Jormungandr would grow to be the perfect base - he had thought he would need to settle for some large fish or perhaps a shark, but this was far better. Loki searched Thor's treasure holdings until he found a secure crate about the right size, emptied it of soggy and ruined sacks of grain, and cut one of the now dry logs into enough wood shavings to cushion and nestle the egg safely and warmly. With perhaps a little help from an occasional heating spell and a seat by the fire, it should be quite comfortable. He then locked it securely, and, with nothing else to occupy his time while he waited, gathered a collection of rugs, torn garments, and other textiles he found laying about and brought them over to his mattress of furs and sacks. He hummed a sea shanty about slaughtering whales as he began to pull each cloth into threads, and the fibers turned black and glittering between his fingers as he tied each knot.

Thor finally returned four days later, and Loki nearly slept through it. He had finished his net, the egg remained silent, and with full knowledge of how dangerous his own insidious boredom could become, he had forced himself into a trance-like sleep. He did not hear the ripple of the water, or

the sound of Thor dragging his body forward on land, until damp, strong fingers were nearly wrapped around his ankle. With a cry of alarm he woke with a start and jumped to his feet before Thor could get a firm grip on him. Thor released him immediately with a snarl, though he could only move back so quickly with his entire long tail above water. Loki stood on his mattress, strongly reminded of meeting Thor for the first time. Then, there was an ocean of frozen water around them, and this time, Thor was the one with land at all sides, and he would be too slow to escape if Loki attempted to trap him.

"So, have you changed your mind about paying me what you owe?" His eyes slid down from Thor's face to the hammer still belted tight around his waist, but he did not let his gaze linger; he did not want to make it too obvious that even when beached, the weapon Thor held would far outstrip him if used correctly.

"I have only come to talk," Thor said with a growl, "If you have come to your senses. I do not mean to let you have parts of me or use what belongs to me to craft un-named and wicked *spellwork*. It does not surprise me to learn that you land-walkers revere witches, but here in the sea we know them for the sneaks and traitors they are."

"You have my solemn word that no one on land reveres witches," Loki said with a snort, "But you do wound me. I have been known to be honest from time to time, especially when trapped and vulnerable as I am." He held his net aloft as he said this, and Thor flinched, but instead of wielding it, he laid it down on the ground between them, and simply walked past Thor calmly to sit cross-legged on a rock near the water line. Thor's brows furrowed, but he took Loki's invitation anyway, and a few minutes later Loki watched him slide back into the water. He kept one hand firm on the shore and eyed Loki critically.

"You are a trickster. I am not so foolish as to take your word for it."

"Of course not. You are wise and well thought of, and understand the difference between honesty and cunning. No doubt you have companions in the underwater city that you can trust."

"Aye, with my life."

"And yet you neglect such friends for the vulgar company of your human pet."

"I find your flesh to be satisfying. That is reason enough."

Loki slid a look over Thor with a small smirk. "I believe you find my mind and conversation to be quite stimulating as well."

Thor paused, then, and looked as if he was about to deny it before shaking his head, his expression still stormy as ever. "This does not mean I have reason to trust you."

Loki let out a quiet sigh. He pulled off his boots, set them to the side, and slid his bare toes carefully into the water, one foot after the other. He took a moment to fight with his survival instinct, then slipped in entirely, completely unarmed, and swam to Thor's side.

"I will do what it takes to prove myself to you," he put his hands soft and innocent around Thor's shoulders, and felt his belly warm when Thor's expression finally cracked into a slow smile as he returned his embrace with his own thick arms tight around his waist. "Would you *like* to trust me?"

Thor was about to open his mouth to speak, but just at that moment, there was...a screech. No, not a screech - a myriad of screeches, as if several hundred tiny little monsters had just awoken and were coming closer. Both of them looked around for the origin of the sound, but it made itself clear in a

matter of moments - there was a swarm approaching from the chamber of Jormungandr's eggs. Hundreds of black-bodied and red-eyed serpents the length of Loki's arm were slithering into the cave and snapping yellow teeth hungrily. Thor shoved Loki unceremoniously against a rock and unstrapped Mjolnir so fast it was if she had flown into his hand.

"The eggs." Loki said with quiet horror as he clung to the stone and watched them approach. "I did mean to ask you about the eggs."

"There should not have been any eggs," Thor snarled, "Jormungandr is sterile, and male besides."

"There were hundreds of them," was all Loki could offer in reply, and there wasn't enough time to say more - the swarm of serpents had reached the water and rushed forward, and Thor's hammer crackled with raw energy as he geared himself up to fight them all off at once. Loki did his best to hide himself, but they ignored him as if he did not exist, and instead all made for Thor at once, venom flying in acid droplets from their teeth as they descended like a swarm of ravenous insects. Thor swatted the first round of them away, killing several with a swift blow from Mjolnir, and even though there were hundreds of them striking from all sides like living cannonballs, they had little effect, their sharp teeth finding no purchase on his impenetrable skin. Thor dodged from one end of the cave to the other, and set his hammer in the water to release a bolt of raw energy that fried another dozen or more. His teeth grit together but his eyes flashed bright and lively, and Loki's nerves eased at Thor's casual assurance. He would knock aside five here, ten there, and played with the insistent black worms with a grin spreading on his face. The serpents then pulled together to create a single mass of writhing black bodies that moved as one, and they faced Thor as a single entity. Thor let the enemies approach before laying down a blow that would fry or smash at least ten at a time, and the surging mass was cut apart and re-grouped a dozen times, growing smaller and smaller with each strike. After he had felled about half of them and began toying with another dozen, a small thread of the snakes broke off from the mass and slithered around to strike him from behind instead. While he was cutting a jagged pattern of dead bodies into the still writhing mass, one serpent sunk its venomous little teeth straight into his gills, and Thor let out such a howl that the inside of Loki's head vibrated from the echo. He ripped the creature in two immediately, and all playfulness left him as he continued fighting, blood now running down his throat and his face grim and furious. Finally he brought Mjolnir above his head, and all the remaining serpents poised to attack him were met with a deadly wall of crackling white light; instead of coming apart or splitting, they *vaporized*, and when the light faded, all was silently, terribly still. Thor turned reddened, unfocused eyes on Loki, and swam close, tossing Mjolnir almost carelessly to shore before using his large body to pin him in against the rock. Loki couldn't take his eyes off of Thor's wound. Dark blood was flowing from it freely, and the edge of it had the same acid yellow color as the serpent's teeth.

"You...are these your...?" Was all Thor managed to get out before he collapsed, and his body brushed by Loki's as he sank beneath the surface. Loki took one quick glance at Mjolnir, at the suddenly empty cave, and then, without another moment of hesitation, dove after him. He was still bleeding freely and sinking fast, and Loki had to swim hard to catch up with his dead-weight body, but once he had his arms locked tight around his middle was when the real trouble began. Thor was easily twice as large as him, and he was now much too far from the surface to pull them both up, he didn't think he *could*, but there wasn't time to think, he had to get them above water, and *now*. Loki started his ascent slowly at first, too slowly, his arms burned and ached with Thor's slippery weight and his legs protested the command to keep kicking at the heavy water, but finally he was moving, then faster, and just when his limbs and lungs were all about to give out, he surfaced. Without stopping to give himself time to catch his breath, he dragged Thor's now even heavier body ashore, and then heaved himself onto it as well. Thor wasn't breathing. There was a horrifying greyish color spreading from the poisoned wound on his neck, and his chest wasn't moving. Panicking, Loki ran across the cave to fetch his apothecary set and spilled several jars as he wrenched it open.

He tossed together as many herbs as he could lay hand to that he knew were good as an antidote, then placed half the combination in his own mouth and smeared the rest on his fingertips. He closed his mouth over Thor's and rubbed his fingers deep into the wounded gill, trying to force him to ingest as speedily as possible. After a few terrible seconds, Thor was still not breathing, and Loki cursed bitterly before biting his own tongue, his only mad thought that the flow might help force the herbs down his throat. A moment passed, and then Thor coughed, and Loki pulled back when he began to spit up a vile-looking yellow fluid, which also began to seep from the wound and burned his fingers as it flowed past. The grey pallor to Thor's face was still there, but it lessened as he breathed, and Loki felt his chest constrict in a painful burn as a completely unbidden sob rocked him, and tears spilled over his cheeks. After Thor had stopped coughing, and the venom seemed to all be out, Loki leaned over and kissed him properly, even though he was still fighting off his own shuddering.

"No," he sighed after he was done, "Those were not mine. They had nothing to do with me."

Thor groaned quietly and nodded in acknowledgement, and Loki looked over his shoulder to watch Thor's fallen adversaries sizzle and disappear into the water. He still was somewhat disturbed that they had passed him by without a glance, as if they could not even see him, or as if he were not worthy prey. It was puzzling, but there were much more pressing matters at hand, and Loki chose to put the question aside and indulge himself in the more immediate, in the steady rise and fall of Thor's warm chest, and the natural flush slowly coming back to his cheeks. He drew his fingertips out of Thor's gills, a bit reluctantly, and let out a quiet sound of appreciation. The herbs still stuck to his fingertips were not able to pierce the blood pearled on them; it was as if every part of Thor's body was just a little too strong for such things. He desperately wanted to bottle it and save it for later, but even he felt that stealing blood while Thor lay recovering from near death would be in bad taste.

"Thor, may I keep this?" He held his blood-soaked fingers up for Thor to see.

Thor seemed to be well out of danger, but he was lying still and breathing hard and heavy. He turned his head in Loki's direction, and frowned.

"No, Loki. You may not keep it."

"Well...may I swallow it? I've let you drink some of mine, and if my suspicions are correct, it saved you from a painful and sudden death. It seems only fair."

Thor considered this for a moment, and after a moment his eyes narrowed, and Loki thought he could see the hint of a smirk pulling at his lips when he nodded. Loki put his fingertips to his mouth and first swiped the herbs away, then began licking the thick and sticky blood from his fingertips. It was more like swallowing little gemstones than drinking liquid, though they slid both salty and sweet onto his tongue, and felt like warm mead running down his throat. When he finished the last drop a shudder went through his whole body, and he let out a soft moan. He could feel that slightly intoxicated warmth pulsing through his whole body now, and huffed quietly when Thor ran heavy fingertips up his inner thigh. He was unsurprised to find that Thor's expression had turned slyly pleased when he met his eyes again.

"Perhaps I should have warned you that might happen."

"I don't exactly mind...but *you* are a sick creature if you've moved on to desire so quickly. Moments ago you nearly died."

"Yet thanks to you, I did not. Get into my lap so I can thank you properly."

Loki did not need to be asked twice, though his lips curled churlishly - Thor was straining to sit up, but his breathing was still ragged, and though his skin was back to its healthy color, he was still pale and his muscles shook. Loki was not all that surprised to find that when he pushed Thor over firmly by his shoulders, he was met with little resistance.

"There, there, my brave warrior...you can let me do the work this time, don't you think? I do have a knack for this sport."

"Ah...I am sure...but I do not-"

"You can trust me," Loki said, as he began exploring the tough and smooth skin of Thor's chest, his shoulders, his arms. He worked his hips down until he was sitting just below Thor's waist, and ground his weight down until he could feel the surging warmth he knew was lurking just beneath Thor's scaly hide, and grinned slowly when he got an answering twitch from the powerful hips he was sitting astride. "We've saved each other from death and exchanged blood. We are now, for all intents and purposes, brothers."

Thor laughed, and Loki was delighted to find that his voice was clear and solid despite his ordeal.

"Loki, us civilized folk beneath the surface do not do *this* with our brothers."

"Then I'm afraid you can no longer claim to be civilized." Loki felt his skin begin to pulse with need, and he slid further down Thor's tail so he could press the heels of both his palms down firmly on either side of Thor's sheath. Thor took a steadying breath before groaning in approval, and Loki continued kneading until he was rewarded with a visible response. A split appeared slowly where it had before, and the red tip of Thor's cock began to slip out inch by inch. Loki coaxed it between his fingers until enough of his flexing length had emerged for Loki to grasp him hot and sticky in his palm. Thor let out another pleased groan, and Loki found that the comparison between Thor's blood and mead was a bit *too* apt - the spice of it was still potent in his mouth, and he was starting to feel almost drunk, though Thor's thick and tapered cock was such an attractive sight on its own it was difficult to determine where the influence began and where his own pent-up lust took over. Then, something else gave him pause. Just below Thor's cock, another slit had appeared, smaller, but just as flushed and glistening. When he examined it curiously he found that it mostly resembled a female organ, but without the outer petals a human's normally had. Thor noticed a moment later what had distracted him, and growled, his tail twitching impatiently between Loki's thighs.

"Leave it."

Loki pretended not to hear, and rubbed the little slit curiously before sinking two fingers inside carefully, which pushed a delightful little squeak out of Thor, and made his thickening cock jump in his palm.

"I said *leave it*. Not there." Thor attempted to sit up again, and placed one hand against Loki's shoulder to try and push him back. Even weakened, Thor was pressing a considerable amount of weight against him, but Loki dug his feet in against the ground to hold fast. Instead, blatantly ignoring Thor's command, he slid his fingers in a little deeper - the passage was extremely tight, but stretched under his gentle pressure, and Loki let out a little breath as he confirmed that yes, with some persistence, it could accept his cock quite nicely.

"Not here, Thor?" he said in an almost airy tone. "Your prick seems to like it, though. Is this another mer-folk protocol that I'm ignoring? 'Don't plunge anything into the wet and wanting hole that presents itself to you'?"

"That is not a *mer*-folk protocol," Thor hissed, "All men with any amount of pride on land or sea

should understand *decency*."

"This is hardly the same as toying with your gills, princess," Loki purred as he continued working little shivers out of Thor as he explored the tender inside of his slick hole. "Are you trying to say that you've never allowed yourself the pleasure of being mounted?"

"Of course I haven't. No real man does. Do not call me *princess*, you appalling deviant."

Loki felt a predatory smirk spread across his face, and the pulse in his own cock was as strong as the one he could feel around his fingers. Despite Thor's reluctance, there was no chance that Loki would hold back now that Thor had unwittingly admitted that this part of him was pure and untouched. Something about claiming the maidenhead of the sea monster that had fucked him into a drooling mess a little less than a week ago seemed quite poetic.

"Oh, but an appalling deviant doesn't know much about what 'real men' do," he purred, and lowered a soft kiss against Thor's cock, "All I know is that you are wet and wanting in my hand. Will you tell me where you find it sweetest, little mermaid?"

"*No*." Thor's face was very red now, and the arm he was holding himself upright with shook as his knuckles on Loki's shoulder turned white. Loki dug his fingers in a little deeper and a little more carefully, and found a knob under the flesh deeper inside that was hard against his fingers. So, it was a little more male than a woman's organ, though it still seemed specifically designed to be mated with. He bore down on that spot and felt an answering shudder through all of Thor's body, and heard the scrape of his broad tailfin frantic against the cave floor.

"Here feels good, does it?"

"Take your hand out," Thor gasped, though Loki freely ignored him, and continued rubbing that sensitive little patch as he pressed his mouth against Thor's salty cock as well, licking and sucking the length of him indulgently. He was careful not to let the tip in too deep into his mouth; he didn't relish being choked by it latching into his throat - at least, not right now. Thor made a valiant effort to remain silent and non-responsive, but he began panting through his grit teeth the more attention Loki paid to that spot inside of him, and his teased slit opened up gradually and began leaking clear fluid as freely as his cock did. Once he forced Thor through a particularly satisfying whimper, Loki sat up and nuzzled against his jaw. His eyes flashed briefly over his bitten and ripped throat before he began purring in his ear.

"Let me fuck you, Thor...I gave you leave when you mounted me. It's only fair for you to give me yours."

"What difference does it make *now*?" Thor ground out between soft pants for air, "You've already opened me up...my *leave* doesn't seem to mean much by you."

"Toying with you is one thing...but I could never properly mate with any manner of beast without their consent."

Thor let out a loud, breathless bark of laughter at that, and Loki grinned devious and unapologetic in return, his nerves humming all the more insistently at the sound.

"I wager that you *could*, witch."

"I could, yes. But not you, Thor. I won't."

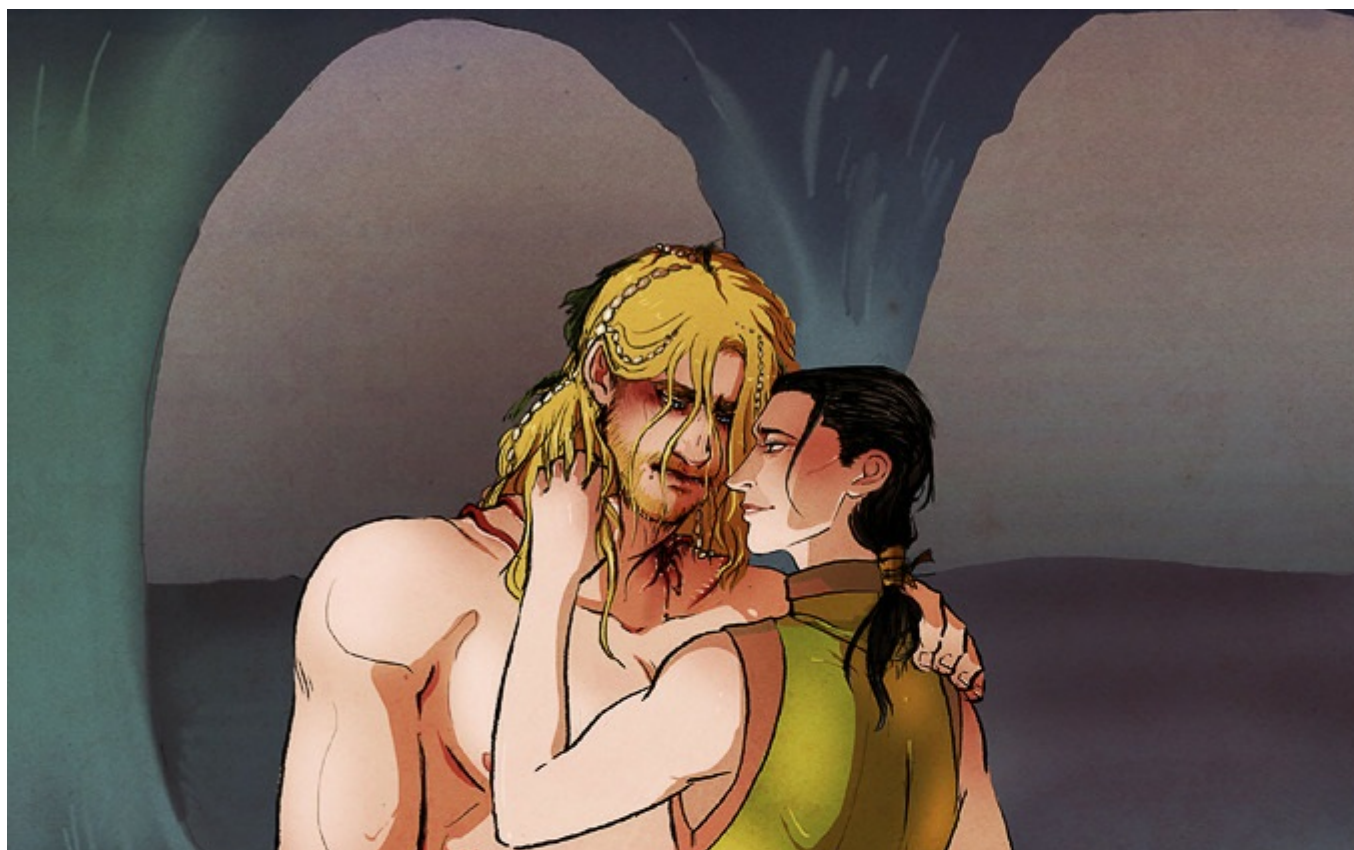
Thor drew several deep breaths, and when Loki slid his now warm and sticky fingers out of his hole he let out a whimper that sounded almost pained. Loki unlaced his trousers slowly to draw

himself out, Thor made a strange sound and looked away, flushed. Loki had to hold back a snort. It was amusing that what he was so ready to swallow down a week ago made him avert his eyes like a white maiden when imagining it thrust into what Loki could only assume was the equivalent of his cunt. He didn't know how deeply the femininity of the organ would reach, but if he *could* impregnate him...his cock twitched warmly at the idea of this wild, manly sea-beast fat with his child, and that desire trembled thick and urgent in his voice as he spoke again.


"Please, Thor."

Thor's eyes squeezed shut, then, after an agonizing pause, he nodded briefly. Hazy, even urgent desire seemed to be winning against his pride, and Loki quietly purred his appreciation as he pressed a heavy kiss against Thor's mouth. After a few teasing strokes, he gripped himself firmly at the base to push the flushed head of his cock against Thor's sticky opening, and rubbed there tightly to get Thor used to the feeling of it. Thor broke the kiss with a soft snarl, though he kept their mouths close together, and Loki murmured a quiet "Ready?" against his lips before carefully breaching his hole. Loki found himself gasping almost before just the head of his cock was buried - the passage was impossibly tight, and Thor's natural heat seemed to double as soon as he sealed him up with the thickness of his prick, making his cunt almost too constrictive, almost *too* hot. He thrust a little deeper anyway, and was rewarded with possibly the sweetest sound he had managed to get out of Thor's throat yet. Loki spread his knees wide over Thor's broad hips to get a better angle, and when he was about half-way in he gripped Thor's waist firmly to help pull his body steadily forward. Thor continued groaning out little chuffs and snarls, and Loki noticed that he had wide eyes dizzily locked on Loki's cock sinking deeper and deeper inside of him, as if he both could not believe what he was seeing, or, most likely, how deeply it aroused him, judging by his twitching cunt and his freely-leaking prick.

"Good girl," Loki murmured, and Thor let out a distracted growl of offense that Loki ignored, "Do you like seeing yourself stuffed like this?" He ran a hand up Thor's shivering chest, and saw that Thor was biting deep into his lip, his jaw so tense it was shaking, and blood was beading at the corner of his mouth. Careful not to thrust any deeper than he already was, Loki leaned forward and licked it away, then whispered a soothing sound against Thor's cheek as he stroked his hair.







"Thor, relax. You want this. Your body craves it. There's nothing wrong with that." Thor flashed him a bright blue glare and looked for several moments like he was unable to speak before he finally got a few words out.

"Yes, there *is*. Your attempt to womanize me-

"No, Thor," Loki murmured again, surprising even himself by how soft and gentle his voice had become. "If manhood could be destroyed by something as simple as my prick inside of you, then this might as well fall out of your body." He gave Thor's cock a heavy squeeze as he spoke, and felt a delicious answering shudder in his cunt as he did so. Thor whimpered wordlessly, and Loki cradled one hand at the back of Thor's neck in a warm gesture of comfort. He looked down to Loki's cock again, and Loki crooned his approval quietly before adding snake-like elegance to the twist of his hips as he finally pressed himself in tight to the hilt.

"Ah," Thor gasped out weakly, and Loki felt his tail begin to curl against one of his thighs, as if he were trying to wrap some of its length around it.

"You see?" Loki purred, more slurring than gentle now, stroking Thor's cock heavily as he began to thrust in and out of him at a steady pace. His cockhead rubbed tight against that sensitive knob of flesh inside him each time he did, and wrung a shudder out of Thor as his reward. "Feels good, doesn't it?" Thor finally whimpered out a quiet sound of assent, and Loki kissed him, his hand tangled deep in Thor's hair as he began to ride him in earnest. Thor's tail was thick and shivering between his thighs, his cock pulsing and slippery in his palm, and his cunt wet, hot, and eager around his dick. With his nerves already burning so furiously and Thor squirming so deliciously beneath him after each thrust, it was difficult for him to keep hold of himself, but with heavy concentration and a quiet bit of slurred spellwork, he held off on spilling long enough to fuck and grind Thor into his own twitching orgasm. His over-sized cock released just as much pooling seed as before, but this time Loki was able to watch as it drooled in thick, milky threads all over his flushed skin and crimson scales. Thor was still twitching and gasping when Loki leaned over to purr in his ear again, too taken by how lovely he was this thoughtless and lost in pleasure to hold off a moment longer.

"It may be a bit...ah, crude to ask so late, but are you in danger of getting with child if I were to spill in this lovely little hole of yours?"

Thor's dizzied eyes tried to focus, and he snarled a bit wetly through his continued panting, his eyes suddenly somewhat wild.

"I can't-Loki-*don't*-"

"Ah...forgive me, it's a bit too late," Loki purred cruelly, and ground tight into that spot that made Thor keen, his clearly over-worked nerves sending spasms through his body and down his tail as he struggled yet again to shove Loki off of him, both his shivering arms straining against his chest this time. He whined out Loki's name, and Loki pressed his forehead tight to Thor's throat as all else whited out and he let out a moan of orgasmic bliss. He spilled hot and deep inside of Thor's body, and Thor's still-twitching cunt felt like it was milking as much from him as it possibly could. He pressed Thor down onto his back again, and they both lay shivering wrecklessly for a few moments until his hips stopped twitching and he was finally spent. When Loki came back to a place where he could think, Thor was still breathing ragged, his eyes shut tightly and his teeth grit. Loki lay still lazily, stroking his sweat-damp hair and admiring him, and after a few moments Thor let out a rough gasp and opened his eyes into narrow blue slits, a rough urgency in his voice.

"Pull out."

"Come now...we can savor the moment a *little*."

"No - Loki, pull back, or you'll be disfigured." In another moment Loki realized what he meant - Thor's opening was beginning to tighten on him, and with a gasp he felt the sharp edge of scales against the base of his cock. He placed his palms tight to either side of Thor's opening to hold it steady long enough to draw his prick free, but as soon as he did the little hole clamped tightly shut, and Loki, caught in post-coital haze and just having narrowly escaped having his cock chopped off, mutely marveled at how much it looked like the opening had never been there in the first place. Thor let out a huff and lay one of his thick and shaking forearms over his eyes as he finally succumbed to exhaustion. Loki took a moment to pout; it seemed highly unfair that he was not even allowed to enjoy a few extra moments with this unique little vulnerability of Thor's, though he soothed himself with the thought that his seed was now locked tight and deep inside his body. He smoothed his palm fondly over the now solid sheet of scale, and kissed him on his bearded cheek as his cock more slowly receded into its sheath as well.

"That was very sweet of you. I promise to do the same if I ever fear your genitals are about to be parted from your body." Thor grumbled something that might have been words, but the words sounded very much like '*Go be fucked by your mother*'. Loki smirked and got to his feet - it did not seem that Thor was likely to move from this spot for the night and they would both need proper bedding. But before he reached his mattress, he paused. Mjolnir's handle was glinting near the edge of the water where it had been dropped earlier. He walked over to it, and bent to pick it up, but was disappointed to find it not only heavy, but immovable. He knew better than to break an arm trying - the hammer was clearly bound to Thor, and he could almost feel its resentment toward another attempting to hold it instead. Turning his back on the scornful hammer, he gathered up a heavy armful of furs and linens and piled them next to Thor, who he was able to coerce with a few nudges to roll over so that he was laying on top of them. Then he boiled some water to make a more proper mixture of the antidote herbs and sliced open one of his fingers to let his blood drip into the steeping mixture as well. He changed into a dry tunic and trousers, and then sat next to Thor, carding one hand through his hair as he offered him a steaming goblet with the other.

"Drink. The poison is not a threat to your life anymore, but this should help you recover your full strength." Thor glared over his shoulder wordlessly, but Loki just shrugged in response. "No, I did not *want* you to recover your full strength until now. You knew that." Thor's glare did not lessen, but he accepted the goblet, drained it, then tossed it away before collapsing with a huff. Loki watched it clang twice on the stone floor before sinking into the water, and simply sighed. Honestly, whoever Odin was, he had not done a very admirable job raising his petulant son. He lay down with his chest to Thor's back, and slung a linen over them both as he settled in to sleep. Thor's warmth and scent next to him were strangely comforting, as was how neatly his body seemed to fit against Thor's fins and tail. They both lay in silence for a while, but after he thought that Thor might already be asleep, he suddenly spoke.

"I will pay you back for this a thousand fold, Loki."

Loki shivered. The intensity in Thor's voice was not to be mistaken, but a greedy, gnawing hunger in his belly throbbed stronger than the fear that should rightfully chill him. He leaned in and kissed the edge of his wounded gill tenderly.

"Unlike you and your easily bruised pride, I happily look forward to it."

Thor let out a scoff, and relaxed again. Another pause went by before Thor once again broke the silence.

"You claim it is not womanly to enjoy what you did to me, yet you called me *maid* and *princess* and *girl*. Why?"

Loki paused, tracing a soft pattern with his fingertips along Thor's strong shoulder blade. Then a slow smile cracked over his lips.

"Why, Thor...because it pleased you so."

Thor elbowed Loki in the ribs for that, and later it was difficult for him to tell whether the bruising pain in his side was worse because of the blow, or for laughing.

Chapter End Notes

You can see another illustration by [Lokisergi](#) for this chapter [here](#)!
[Sovietgod](#) has also done an illustration of both this chapter AND chapter 2 AND a gorgeous mer-Thor portrait! You can see the portrait on [her blog](#) <3

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Thor loses his temper, and Loki's plans fall apart.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When Thor woke, the first thing he noticed was how very dry he felt. No water moved between his fingertips when he flexed them, and when he rolled onto his back he felt fur brush his skin and warm, direct sunlight on his face. He kept his eyes closed as his mind sluggishly began to piece together what had happened the night before. He came to his private cave to find Loki asleep - deeply asleep. He hadn't woken when Thor shouted, or struck the shore (as hard as he dared) with Mjolnir, and he had worried something was very wrong. Recklessly, he had crept ashore to try and rouse him. Then...Thor blinked his eyes open, and the rest came back to him in a rush. Hundreds of glittering red eyes from nowhere - weakness, fever, mindless, gut-wrenching pleasure and Loki's voice panting syrupy insults and equally sickly comfort in his ear. Pain. Poison. Five hundred serpents had attacked *him*, but passed Loki by as if he were a ghost. He sat upright, which disturbed the gentle hold Loki had on his waist. He did not even give him a chance to let out a waking groan before grabbing him by the throat and tossing him into the center of the pool. He took one satisfying moment to watch Loki yelp and splutter in the water, then pulled himself forward to dive nearly the whole distance he had thrown him in one movement. His muscles seared in protest - clearly they had not quite recovered from the venom, but he paid it no mind, and surfaced right beside Loki to grab him tight by his tunic and hold him above his head. Loki coughed and struggled, and Thor felt his chest constrict with much more heat and bitterness than he had been capable of the night before.

"You *worm*. Those serpents *were* your doing. You poisoned me, nearly killed me, shamed me - and you asked me to *trust* you, while smiling!" Loki's eyes widened in fear as Thor's fists tensed, and he threw Loki against the wall of the pool, where he struck hard against the rock, hissed in pain, and struggled to remain above water. Thor advanced on him again, his vision still white hot, but his thundering pulse slowed to a steadier beat when he saw watery tears in Loki's eyes. That's right. That was why he had made the mistake of trusting him the night before. When he woke after the serpent's bite, it was to Loki's blood in his mouth - his face twisted in pain, his breathing harsh, and his odd green-and-red eyes spilling over with tears.

Lies, Thor told himself, and thrust his hand roughly to Loki's chest, pinning him to the slippery cave wall. Loki grit his teeth and clawed into his arm, and Thor shook him violently to force him into stillness

"I should put an end to you for what you've done. I should have let you freeze on the surface."

"Do it, then. You could strangle me, or twist my head off if you like. You could have done it when I was filling you with my cock last night, but for *some* reason you chose not to."

With no thought at all, Thor struck Loki across the face. Loki gasped in pain, and then he was silent. His eyes didn't dry, but they went cold, as if his gaze was going somewhere very far off. Thor's hot veins cooled gradually as he watched a dark mark appear on Loki's cheek, and he

realized that he felt almost weightless under his hands, as if he were barely in the water beside him at all.

"You will not speak out against me again." This time Loki did not respond, and did not look up. Thor shook him, and grabbed him by the jaw. "*Loki*."

Loki's eyes did not focus, and he did not speak. In frustration, Thor thrust himself away from him, and felt relief when Loki instinctively caught himself against the rocks to avoid sinking. He had half expected him to disappear under the surface and dissolve into the water like sugar or foam.

"You had better right yourself and get to shore." Thor finally declared, though he may as well have been announcing himself to the wall for all Loki responded. Whatever trance he had been in when he had found him the previous night seemed to be taking hold again, and Loki was slipping, slowly, the grip of his fingers on the rocks not firm enough to hold him steady.

It is well this way, Thor thought to himself, *He has outstayed his purpose, and is responsible for nefarious schemes besides. If he quickly drowns all the better, he is only a mortal in the first place.* Sense. Good, common sense. Odin thought that his first son and heir lacked sense; that he was rash and thoughtless and could not tell the difference between impulse and righteousness. The truth was that Thor often knew exactly what the sensible thing to do was, and yet he could not help but choose the opposite. He reached forward and took a rough fistful of Loki's tunic before dragging him back to shore. Loki collapsed onto his hands and knees, and then sat, but still refused to look at Thor.

"Do not drown yourself before I return," Thor finally hissed, unsure of whether he was heard. "That is an order. You will only die by my hand."

Loki did not speak, but before he turned to dive below the water, Thor thought he caught a flicker of red and green eyes watching him go.

The mood of Asgard suited his ill temper very poorly when he returned. He found it bustling, from the highest tower to the lowest tunnel - everyone was chattering and laughing so that the entire reef seemed to be buzzing with delight. Asgard was often a jolly place, but this morning she was streaked in decorative pennants and lights, noisy with the grunts and growls of exotic and labor beasts, and the scents of honey and liquor were so strong it was as if the brewery below ground were attempting to intoxicate the entire ocean. Everyone from the carpenters to the soldiers to the small children were out, dousing every turret in an unusual choice of blue and green decoration. He came upon Volstagg and Hogun towing an enormous net of what seemed to be several dozen struggling seals, and called out.

"What's happened to the city? I was not even gone a day."

"A load of foolishness," Hogun grumbled, though he did not elaborate, occupied as he was with shoving a howling seal's face back into the confines of the net.

"I'm afraid he may be right, Thor," Volstagg grunted as he used his considerable weight to force the squirming net into place as Hogun tied it down. He took a deep breath after their charges were settled, and then they both ascended to Thor's depth. "In the night, a messenger came from the Vanir - their vice-lord Heimdall was all but threatening war, though king Njord has yet to give the order. Odin advised Aegir in conference till dawn-"

"Trying to reason with the unreasonable," Hogun sniffed.

"-But Aegir would not see it his way. Odin felt we should deal a preliminary strike against Vanaheim, and wipe out the threat before it mounts any higher. Aegir, on the other hand-

"Wishes to throw them a banquet, of course!" Fandral joyously interrupted. He and Sif had appeared from beyond the stables where they had been pulling in what looked like freshly carved racing chariots. "A masquerade, to be precise. Aegir feels that all the Vanir need is to feel comfortable in our midst, and learn from our example. Their Heimdall might be a crotchety old stiff, but king Njord will see the decency in us, in our city and...culture."

"Let's not pay heed to the considerable might nor grudge of Vanaheim. Let's invite the entire city to dwell in ours so that they may listen to the 'culture' of Fandral's erotic poetry." Hogun monotoned, and Volstagg let out a snort as Fandral's moustache quivered on his pursed lip.

"I sense you are insincere in that sentiment, sir, however I will remind you that it was my poems that tamed the-

Thor let his friends bickering become background chatter for the ache in his head. He was still feeling weak from the poison, and starting to feel distinctly nauseated as well, as if he had eaten something sour. He put a careful hand to his abdomen with a wince, and more of Loki's disturbing words interrupted his thoughts, particularly *with child*.

"Thor, are you well?"

His other friends were distracted, but Sif's sharp eyes honed in on his discomfort, though he waved her off with a bright smile at once.

"I am more of Hogun's mind than Fandral's, I think," he said, quick to change the subject, though he kept his voice low, "Not much good will come of this banquet."

"We will see," Sif said, though she did not sound particularly neutral. Sif was not quick to trust, but the Vanir were hardly the worst of their enemies. "Your father is mobilizing a heavy guard under cover, for when they arrive in a few week's time. Half of Asgard will be Aegir's drunken party-goers, and half will be an army in the shadows."

"I would expect nothing less from my father."

"Thor, what are you hiding? You've been hurt."

At this, the warriors three turned to their prince as well, and Thor had to now wave all four of them off.

"It is nothing. A bit of an accident hunting last night."

"On the surface?" Fandral said brightly, though Hogun hissed.

"No, a shark happened by."

"That is small for a shark bite," Volstagg supplied helpfully.

"It was a *small shark*." Thor knew he was fooling no one, but there wasn't time to adequately satisfy prying questions. He had some of his own, that must be answered at once if he was to avoid a far more humiliating situation than this. "Sif, where is my mother?"

All of Lady Frigga's chambers had open windows. Her rooms faced one of Asgard's largest courtyards, which was lined with greenery and coral that she often tended herself. Not only did gardening please her, but intimacy with her surroundings was the best way to enhance her powers as a seer, which she and Odin relied on strongly. Today the courtyard was peppered with craftsmen, servants and warriors hanging banners and erecting a large tent that would, by the look of the seats and acoustics being arranged, soon serve as a theatre. Thor tried not to scowl too obviously, and instead slipped past the small stream of cheerful laborers (forcing a nod towards Balder when he waved hello) and approached the window through which he could best see his mother.

"I presume that you would not allow them to soil your garden unless you approved of this coming event, mother."

Frigga looked up from a pressed-seaweed book of music she had laid over her golden-green lap and smiled.

"My visions have given me peace, in this. Your father insists on fretting because there is no logic to it, and I forgive him, but all will be well." Her amusement faltered, however, when she spotted the fresh mark on Thor's throat. He sighed and sat himself on her windowsill as she reached over to tuck his floating hair behind his ear.

"Not many creatures can injure my prince of Thunder. What have you been tangling with?"

"Most recently, a serpent. Father once told me he put the Great One to sleep several hundred years ago, and that it would never wake."

If Frigga was shocked or alarmed, her only expression of it was in a small tightening of her lips. Thor felt his belly clench, but his mother always kept his secrets, though she did guess at them far too easily.

"'Never' is such a very long time, Thor. Even as strong as you are, if Jormungandr had bitten you, it is not likely you would have survived."

Thor hesitated, but with another surge of nausea that made him hold back a wince, he leaned in to more quietly attempt the angle of his next question.

"And if he were to wake," he said, weighing each word as carefully as he could, "He could not possibly produce...eggs, could he? Among other things, Jormungandr is *male*, after all."

There was an almost imperceptible raise of Frigga's eyebrow, and she frowned in mild disappointment. She smoothed the cover of her book shut over a golden comb she often used as a marker, and set it aside.

"You were taught better than that, Thor. Jormungandr is one of the ancient giants, from before our time. In the beginning the ocean did not birth male and female, but beings that were both and neither all at once. Our first ancestor, Ymir, was such a creature. If this were not so, our race could not have come into being. Over time we began to love each other, instead. Men closed up, women bore children, and our lives became what they are today."

The recitation of history (something he now distantly remembered; Thor had forgotten much from as recently as a year ago to as distant as five hundred in his life) did very little to ease his worry. He fidgeted while his mother looked on, quizzical and pleasant, and he felt she could predict which words were forced out of his mouth as he recited them.

"Yes, but you have never heard of a man begotten with child, mother. Have you? Not in our time."

She smiled, finally, and when she shook her head her fair curls floated gracefully about her cheeks and neck.

"No, Thor. It is not possible anymore."

Thor let out a sigh so unmistakable that Frigga laughed.

"This is not to say there is no value in continuing to behave as we once did. Men can still enjoy a woman's *pleasures* from time to time."

Thor interrupted with an aggressive huff through his sore gills that made the water around him hiss. Balder caught his eye from across the way in puzzlement, and he scowled bitterly at his little brother until he went back to hauling lumber to the tent.

"Speaking in riddles does not suit you, darling. Did a serpent truly bite you, or is that the work of your lover as well?"

"Mother," Thor growled, though the worst of the humiliation was over, and relief was flooding in. The discomfort in his abdomen that had been so distracting before faded into the dull throb of simple pain it actually was. "It was a serpent, now dead. I took on too many at once."

"Will you ever learn?" She shook her head, and rose to lean with him against the spacious sill. "You should feel at least a bit of shame that they call a brother so much younger than you Wise where Thor is simply Brave and Mighty. They would say Foolish if you would not have their heads for it."

"But I would have," said Thor with a cross of his arms. In spite of his hard-won relief he was in no mood for jokes. "And they would be wrong, besides." Frigga stroked his hair and took a closer look at his cut. She opened a chest on her vanity to produce a ball of medicinal weeds for him to chew, which she handed to him gently before lounging on her chaise as she had been when he found her.

"Do your best to make up with your gentleman before the concert, love," she said as if idly, leafing through her music again, "If you do not attend due to sourness, mother will be most put out."

Thor, at a loss for words partly because of the sticky weed holding his teeth together and mostly because of his mother's casual bluntness, grunted in irritation before departing to deal with the second most burning question.

The keeper of the library, Mimir, was having a very bad day. He was already under strain because a whole host of common folk and servants had invaded the hall which contained his strategically disorganized collection to try and make it presentable for the coming guests. And now, here was Thor coming to pay him a visit as well. The prince of Thunder was not known for his respect of the written word. He often spoken plainly in court of how easily lies could be woven between ink and paper, especially with the sea always making its best effort to tear them apart. Thor preferred barbaric battles of flesh to the civility of scripture. In truth Thor's bitterness towards books was partially due to a secret frustration - he had learned reading and writing well enough as a boy, but to this day he often got letters mixed around, sometimes entire words. Mimir's strongest memory of Thor when he was barely adolescent, hurling an early edition of *The Lyfe of Seawaker* into a coral bush and destroying it quite spectacularly.

"If you would calm yourself for a moment," Thor finally snapped, silencing the many-finned librarian with a wave of his arm, "I need information on the ancient ones. Jormungandr, in particular. On how they lived, or how to kill them, anything of the sort. Do you have books like that?"

"I have some, but they are very delicate," Mimir replied tersely, though Thor could see he was straining not to be outwardly impolite, "And irreplaceable. Do you understand me, my prince?"

Thor took a deep breath to chastise the man further, but held it, and clenched his fists instead.

"I understand. I will not touch them. If I allow you to open and turn them for me, will you take me there?"

Mimir looked shocked, but nodded, and with a nervous look at the cleaning crew, led Thor to the back of the rather gloomy, lightless library. Instead of swimming up one of the many shelves carved out of the walls or formed of whale bone, Mimir instead swam to an area rug on the floor, pulled it aside, and began the process of unlatching a circular hatch that was hidden beneath it. Thor put his hands on one of the stone tables nearby that served as a reading surface and watched as Mimir carefully hauled up a heavy and tattered volume that looked like it might have been red at one point, but was now gray and covered with algae. He laid it in front of Thor as if he were laying one of his children before the jaws of a shark, and Thor once again held back a spiteful remark.

"Please turn to any information of use concerning Jormungandr, and do not stall me."

Mimir sighed, and grumbled something about royal fancy becoming the death of him and the treasure he guarded, but began to delicately turn the somewhat translucent pressed-seaweed pages. As he did, Thor could see they were not written with ink, but instead artfully burned in the shape of the letters they carried.

"These are scorched," he remarked with grudging interest.

"As I said," Mimir replied, "Delicate. The markings are in the old way, which makes them more difficult to fade - but the burnt parchment is much easier to tear, and many of these pages are missing despite my best efforts."

Mimir then turned to the section covering Jormungandr, and the rather patchy, inaccurate diagram that depicted him. Thor leaned in closer to see if something in this mangy book would quell the nagging in the back of his mind. There were descriptions of scale color, of venom, of a tooth won from the snake that had been worn about the neck by one of the old kings, only to have it stab him to death in his sleep as if the disembodied fang grew a mind of its own. There seemed to be little else of interest, but when Mimir was about to pull the book away Thor spotted a tiny diagram of a woman, blue-skinned and fair-tailed with her belly cut away to reveal a bright green egg.

"Stop," Thor said, and Mimir spat water in exasperation. He pulled the book back to read a cryptic caption below.

*Through fire begot
Through water unfolded
We are the serpent and he our child
She is the serpent and we her husband*

His mother was right; he did hate riddles. That he knew the answer to this one only made it more disturbing, somehow. He smiled grimly at Mimir and thanked him, his mind now emblazoned with the pregnant woman's serene, crudely drawn face and four red eyes. On his way out of the library,

one of the guards hailed him.

"Your father has asked for you urgently, my prince."

Thor felt for his hammer and realized, with a sudden drop of his already twisting gut, that he had left it in his grotto with Loki.

"It will have to wait," Thor replied briefly, and left quickly enough that he hoped neither the guard nor librarian could follow which direction he had gone.

When he returned to the cave, it was silent. Loki was missing, as were most of his accommodations - the apothecary set, a rucksack of oddities, his food, bedding, and a wooden crate that had been set near the now abandoned fire pit were all gone, leaving the still treasure-stuffed cave somehow chillingly empty. Mjolnir, to Thor's relief and puzzlement, was exactly where he had left her the night before. He did his best to keep silent as he approached, on alert for some sort of sinister trap as revenge for that morning, but the hammer whispered no warnings, only impatience for his company. When he picked her up she became happily silent once more, and as far as he could tell she had not been touched. Either Loki had left her alone, or, more likely, had found himself unable to lift her. His worry about the hammer allayed, guilt rushed in to take its place. Loki could not have gone far, but Thor doubted that he would come out of hiding just from calling his name this time. He swam further into the pool, towards a shallow channel that led off into darkness. The temperature of the water here grew very chilly, and had a slippery, ill quality to it that Thor suspected had to do with Jormungandr's venom. He'd have to be careful to keep his gills above the surface, but with luck he could use the map of channels it lead to to search for Loki. As he swam the cave above became too thick to let daylight in, and the water expanded and began to run much faster until it dropped over a sheer and sudden edge. Thor swam just out of reach of the strongest currents and took hold of a rock so that he could peer over the drop. Although it was invisible from straight on, if he were to lean forward beneath a rocky overhang, he could see down into a tower-like chamber that held, at the bottom of it, the endless, acid-green coils of Jormungandr. As far as Thor could see, the snake was deeply in hibernation, and breathing hard enough that he could almost feel it flutter through his hair and pearls. He could also see that its tail disappeared into an opening on the other side of the chamber, but it was difficult to tell just how much of its body was missing from the wormy mess below.

This channel was shorter than Thor remembered, and the water flowed faster. Despite how awkward it was to confirm, Thor was face to face with the reality that Jormungandr's children had, unintentionally, been his own doing. *She is the serpent and we her husband*, the book had crudely taunted - Loki had unwittingly bathed his seed right into Jormungandr's otherwise lifeless hatchlings.

"I thought that skulking was not to your taste."

The clear, cold voice behind him made Thor's heart leap into his throat. He turned around, and nearly blundered into the waterfall current in his eagerness to see Loki, who was barely visible as a tall and fur-laden silhouette standing on the bank.

"Loki, I came to..." Thor winced, and swam a bit closer to get out of the rushing water. "I came to apologize."

Loki let out a dry snort.

"You sneak in without bellowing, and in the shadows feign humility? Did Thor send a cheap

replica of himself now that he is sick of me?"

"Let's have some light, then," Thor said, "I want to see your face."

After another pause, Loki sighed, and turned to walk along the bank of the channel Thor was swimming in.

"Follow me, I'll make a fire."

Thor swam beside Loki to a large space of land much darker than his own treasury. Even though it was still only early evening above the surface, the cave here blocked out daylight at almost any time. As Loki built up the fire, Thor could see small pools of water glittering further inland where Loki was sitting, completely separate from the channel he was still mostly submerged in. Loki's comforts were all here, including a rack of freshly caught fish (*he is, after all, a fisherman by trade*, Thor reminded himself with a pout, for though he had never planned to follow through on starving his prisoner, he liked imagining he had the option.) Once there was enough firelight to illuminate Loki's face, Thor's throat stuck. He looked hollow and exhausted. The blow that Thor had landed had swollen one of his eyes, and his hair was unkempt and strewn across his cheeks. Other than tossing on his old clothes to keep himself warm in this much chillier cave, he seemed to not have tended to himself all day. Just as he was about to re-phrase his request for forgiveness, an awfully familiar screech interrupted. Beady red eyes peered over the edge of the pool closest to Loki's fire, and made to dash toward him - he tensed and grasped Mjolnir at once - but before the serpent could even emerge, it was yanked back by a thick rope looped tight around its neck, tied to a stake driven deep into the ground. It screeched again, but could go no further, and when Thor turned furious eyes on Loki he was met with an unsurprised, deadened stare.

"Loki, you kept-"

"Yes. I did. I set aside an egg before any of them had hatched, because I needed a worthy sea-creature for myself. Now, predictably, your temper will get the better of you, and you will slay her, and the cosmic futility of my plans will once again be the rule of this pitiful thing I call a life."

Thor didn't like this tone at all, and he swallowed. It must be a trap, but the heaviness in Loki's voice was too real, and if he gave him time to speak, this may somehow make sense.

"What *are* your plans, Loki?"

Loki gave him a hard look, and Thor did his best to untense. He let go of Mjolnir's shaft, approached the bank, and pulled himself cautiously onto dry land to sit beside Loki and his fire. Loki fidgeted uncomfortably - he clearly hadn't expected Thor to approach, and it would have made Thor smile to see Loki so uncomfortable if the situation had been less dire.

"I...am trying to to trick fate into believing I have been properly buried."

Riddles again. Thor grit his teeth, but held his patience. Loki was sweating, and Thor could see that despite the puzzling words, this was very difficult for him to say.

"I do not understand...what has burial to do with anything?"

Loki closed his eyes, and when he began to shiver, Thor slid closer to him, and carefully put an arm around his shoulders. Loki stiffened at first, but after a while he let out a slow breath and began to speak, mostly to the ground.

"I am not quite mortal, as you suspected early on. But you were incorrect when you called me *more* than mortal...for I am less. My first memory is of dying. I was a newborn, looking up at a

snowy forest, but dead. I could not walk, so I crawled until I found human life. I wandered for two years or more before I met a living soul willing to feed me. After that I was alive again...in a way. I cannot go near cemeteries. In moments of quiet I am filled with such longing for death that I can barely think. Fate continued to demand that I die, but I wanted to *live*. Through the power of that will I grew, but others found me strange, so it has been unsafe to stay in one place for long. I wandered. Through wandering I learned magic, trade, the art of playing others, the sea..." Loki trailed off for some time, and Thor, his chest twisting, was about to break the silence when Loki continued, at barely above a whisper. "When I rode on your back to this cave, I felt peace for what might have been the first time. If I can reach the underwater city, perhaps I can trick fate out of forcing me into the grave. That far under water might be deep enough. If not..." He shrugged, and his voice became clear and steady once more. "I will admit defeat, and die as I was meant to by those who abandoned me."

Thor found himself tense and uncomfortable, but without thinking pulled him closer. Loki made a soft sound, and looked up at him with wide, questioning eyes for a few moments, then sighed and laid his bruised cheek against Thor's chest.

"And the serpent," Thor could feel his tension and guard creeping slowly back, though it was now paired with a heated need to protect the creature he was holding, "Why do you need it?"

"There is a spell, that, if I can perform it accurately, will allow me to merge with a creature of the sea and change form at will. This should solve the problem of the trip to your underwater city being deadly, either by drowning or murder."

Thor pictured Loki with fins and tail and gills over his pretty neck, and felt a shiver of desire go through him that was several layers thicker than simple lust. If Loki was fit for the ocean and could join him in Idunn's orchard, the first taste of her fruit would almost certainly heal him of this terrible curse. Now that Thor could picture it, he wouldn't have it any other way. He would give up Loki as his mortal prisoner as the small price it was for the chance to live with him side by side, for as many lifetimes as he wished.

"Asgard," Thor said thoughtfully, his mind still in fantasy with such thoughts.

"What?"

"My city is named Asgard, Loki. If you are going to live there soon, you should start calling her by her proper name."

Loki looked bewildered for a moment, and mouthed the name silently as he processed what Thor was saying. "You will help me?"

"Yes, in any way I can."

Loki then laughed, a helpless, wracking laughter very different from his smooth chuckles or sarcastic snorts. He was nearly in tears when he stopped, and wiped away beads of moisture as Thor continued to smile in pleased confusion. Finally, Loki contained himself, gasping.

"This is a relief, because I couldn't have managed it without you."

Thor grinned. "I can help in a few ways you wouldn't have expected, as well. Asgard will be hosting an enormous masquerade for a people known as the Vanir in a little over a fortnight. They are often our enemies, so king Aegir is attempting to...smooth things over. I do not see any reason one extra would be of much concern to anyone once the feast is at its thickest."

"You're right, that does help," said Loki, who was so cheered he was flushed and glowing again. "I will have to craft a proper mask for the occasion. Which reminds me...would you be any more willing now to lend me a few of your scales?"

"Ah, that..." Thor paused for just a moment before tugging Loki's dagger from his belt. Gritting his teeth against the pain, he fit the blade under a row of scales that fanned over the fat of his hip, and bent them back far enough so that he could pluck them free with his fingers. They did not leave a wound, but each one had a few drops of blood clinging to the pale root as he laid them on the ground. Loki watched in silence, and only reached for the scales when it was clear that he had laid out the last one. He examined each almost reverently, and then smiled.

"Thank you...I do not take this lightly, Thor." Loki kissed him then, and Thor felt the sort of peace Loki may have been describing thrum like a harp in his chest. When he began to pull on Loki's hips and back to draw him closer, though, Loki shook his head and parted their mouths with a quiet sound.

"No. You've earned my refusal after your atrocious display this morning. An apology alone won't erase that."

Thor snarled softly, but held himself back. He did not like the idea of their most recent coupling hanging over him as the status quo for much longer, but even he could appreciate how fragile this new balance was. "I will stay with you tonight, though. My father was looking for me when I left and I'm in no mood for him."

"What if I told you not to?" Loki raised a brow at him quizzically. Thor's frown deepened, but after a moment it broke, and let out a frustrated sigh.

"Then I would let you be."

Loki examined his face, then smiled softly.

"That may actually be so. Stay here, I'll fetch something for us to sleep on."

They lay side by side for some time in silence, and Loki, clearly exhausted, fell asleep with his face half-buried in fur. Just as Thor was about to close his eyes and do the same, Loki twitched in his arms, and cried out. Suddenly wide awake, he almost grasped Loki's shoulder to rouse him, but he was still again, though his breathing was labored and his dark brows furrowed over his tightly closed eyes. Thor watched him for a few moments before caressing his dark hair over the shell of his ear. He pressed his lips to the inside of it softly, and began to sing. In the language of the sea, he hummed a child's lullaby about a mother who laid an enchanted shell beneath her child's pillow so that she could keep him safe wherever she was. Gradually Loki's face began to relax, and his breathing became even, and his weight went heavy and limp in Thor's arms. Thor watched his face and felt that thrumming, thrilling peace through his chest as he pictured what Asgard was about to become. Not just the sea, not simply home, but the city where Loki lived, where anything could happen.



Chapter End Notes

I do not think I can even describe the shivering pathetic meltdowns I had over writing this chapter, but it was worth it.

For reference, Loki is (or was, until he Loki'd his way out of it) a [myling](#).

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Loki performs his diplomatic talents, and Thor expresses his boundless self-confidence. Heimdall stands angrily by.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The entire cave stank of acid. Loki had kept the serpent sedated and harvested her venom until there was enough of it to fill two large vats placed on either side of the small, perfectly round island that he and Thor had crafted into the site of his ritual. He had declined to move back to the sunnier part of the grotto, since too much sun or heat could throw off what needed to be very exact conditions. With Thor's help he had connected six of the pools littering the ground until they resembled a small moat, with the water between them high enough to reach Loki's knees. Thor had also gone back and forth from Asgard with as many books as he was allowed to carry out of the library at a time, and Loki either copied or memorized the most useful parts of each, with special attention to all things biological. One of the items he had copied was a nearly life-sized anatomical view of a male merman, which was nailed to a stack of crates near Loki's makeshift bed. Thor wished he hadn't taken such care in being so lovingly detailed about it; Loki's copy made him uneasy in a way the original never had. He wouldn't have to worry about it for much longer, though, because after twenty three days of preparation and waiting, the serpent had grown to a glistening black eight feet in length, and Loki had finally declared her ready.

"Stay outside the circle, or you'll burn yourself," Loki reminded Thor as they finished the task of nailing the muzzled, flailing creature to the center of the island, "And remember the pronunciation properly, or you'll end up killing me instead of merging me."

"It's not *my* pronunciation we need to worry about," Thor snorted, "You'll never pass for Vanir the way your accent is coming along. Say 'Greetings, my king' again; I need a good laugh before we get started."

"I've barely been paying attention yet. You said yourself that I would need gills to make two thirds of it work." Thor rolled his eyes and (with more grace now, through practice), crossed the shallow moat and settled on the flat land on the other side, facing the island. Loki checked one final inscription, and took a deep breath. Fear coursed through him so potently it was as if his veins were burning.

This is the end, he kept thinking to himself, *All this study and hard work for a particularly bloody and brutal death. At least it won't be boring.* He ground his teeth and forced his mind to turn back to the facts. He had a knife in his left hand and an incantation carved into his right. With gold ink he had drawn runes on the serpent's skin over her major attributes - heart, lungs, liver, eyes, spine, womb. She struggled until she exhausted herself, and sagged, resigned, in the ropes that held her down. She lay flat on her back, tail twitching every so often as Loki watched her calm into stillness. Loki looked towards Thor, who was on his belly in front of the pedestal they had carved to channel Mjolnir's energy. The hammer's presence in the cave had been sleepy and quiet, but she seemed to sense the importance of the task at hand, and the air was becoming thick and viscous

with her excitement. Thor nodded to him, and the hammer's glow was reflected brightly in his shining blue eyes. The burning fear that had threatened to overwhelm him dropped to the back of his mind. Without further hesitation, he began.

The first part of the ceremony was inelegant. Loki shoved the two vats of collected venom over so that they spilled into the shallow moat. The earth and water both hissed in displeasure, and steam began to rise around him, shrouding the island in a sinister yellowish fog. He then turned back to the serpent, and slipped out of the silk robe that had been his only garment until then. He sat astride her, put both his palms to her beating heart, and murmured the incantation that was carved into his right hand. She jerked beneath him, and a desperate little screech emerged from her bound jaw, but Loki did not lose a moment. As soon as the last syllable left his lips, he plunged the knife into the golden line he had painted on her belly, and sliced until her entire middle was split. Once she was open he moved so quickly and automatically he barely thought. He started with the liver, slicing it free of her body and tearing a mouthful of it off and swallowing without pausing to chew. He only needed one lung, one eye; the shard of spine tore his throat as he swallowed it. Her womb he took several mouthfuls of, and set to work cutting her ribs apart while his mouth was still full and blood ran down his chin. Instead of cutting her heart free from her body, he reached into her chest with both bare hands, and sunk his teeth into while it was still struggling furiously to beat. The heart-flesh sizzled and burned his tongue, and he felt poison run through him, and his body start to go numb. He raised his hand quickly to call on Thor to finish the spell before he lost his ability to move. A moment passed, then another, and for a wild heartbeat it seemed as if Thor had been unable to see him through the acid steam, and then, through a strange, numb silence, Mjolnir's shape glowed in front of him, and her energy engaged with the potent fog and created a ring of clean, clear light. From directly in front of him, where Thor held her, he could feel her will pulling at him - taking him apart and putting him back together - if he had had any movement at all he would have screamed, but as it was he endured in shivering silence as his body was re-assembled through and through. His legs were numb, the inside of his chest burned as organs were grown and rearranged, and lastly his throat seared in what should have been a death's stroke as four cuts on either side opened it up in painful slashes that felt like they reached all the way to his spine. Then, finally, the light faded, and though the pain did not lessen, the paralysis did, and Loki was finally able to let out a horrible grunting gasp of agony.

"Loki!" Thor called from behind the wall of mist. It was difficult to see. His body was sticky and smoke was pouring off of it. He could see his pale hands in front of him, but when he tried to look behind him to the knees he had previously been leaning on, it almost seemed as if his waist ended in a pit of tar, and that he had accomplished nothing but becoming the first human to live through severing themselves in half.

"Come," Loki growled out in Thor's direction, his throat feeling ripped in two, "Help me."

Thor did not need any encouragement. In a matter of moments he was by his side, warm and glowing as always, and Loki let himself go slack when Thor pulled what was left of him into his arms and dragged him from the shore towards a deeper pool of pure water. It was only when they were both fully submerged that the pain and dizziness began to recede, and Loki was able to take the full breadth of his new physical form. The tar-like plasma was washing away from his hips, which now flared smoothly into a sleek black tail, with golden fins rippling gently along both the line of his back and his front. The cuts on his throat were gently taking in water, and he dumbly placed a hand against his neck to feel the sensation run through the new organs in his chest, the impulse to breathe as he did on the surface having been completely replaced. Thor, beside him, looked as jubilant as a child with a new toy.

"Well, little witch? Did it work?"

Loki moved the muscles that had belonged to his searing legs, and the tail responded. He drew for breath and his gills expanded. He smiled slow and wide and pulled Thor in for an almost viciously tight celebratory embrace.

“I can *breathe*.”

“We still have to teach you to speak properly. The banquet begins in two days.”

Loki kissed him fondly, and Thor rumbled a purr into it - the water surrounding them made the sound ripple through his entire body as he did.

“We crafted an entirely new creature out of me in three weeks. Some irregular verbs shouldn’t be too much trouble.”

—

The Vanir were due to arrive any moment and Thor was posted right outside of the main gate with a large assembly of soldiers and nobility to welcome them. Odin, once he had finally managed to locate and find time to properly bellow at him for his selfish and dangerous neglect of their soon-to-be-besieged city (if you were to take his word for it), had given him strict orders to protect Asgard from any suspicious behavior, and be ready for all out battle if necessary. Although he had at first had been against the banquet exactly as Odin was, his feelings towards a city full of drunken Vanir had warmed considerably when they had provided the convenient window needed for Loki to establish himself as a resident. He had taken all of Thor’s advice on how to behave without comment - and to be honest Thor found himself a bit short on helpful information to give in the first place. He had a feeling that Loki had a better understanding of Vanir culture from reading the books he had brought him than he had obtained by being their neighbor for all thousand-some years of his life. That wasn’t his fault, though, Thor thought to himself as he tossed Mjolnir from one hand to another, eliciting a disapproving hiss from Sif beside him, the Vanir were just very boring people.

Just as the thought left his head, the procession began to arrive. The distant music of several conch trumpets sounded as a glittering band of silver fore-runners came into view. Thor and his captains tightened ranks outside of Asgard’s main gates, but there was no threat to be wary of. The Vanir guardsmen, expressionless, gave their soon to be hosts a reverent bow. Soon after, the bulk of the party began to arrive - a glittering, musical crowd, all masks and merriment with king Njord reclining on the back of a beautiful (and ancient, by the look of her eyes and scars) white whale directly in the center. After the royalty, the nobility, then the performers, and the general merry-goers. Last in the party were the soldiers. They swam in tight, militant ranks, clad in black armor with helmets for their masks. They were like an army of shadow shapes so distinctly different from the merry family that went before them they almost seemed like another line entirely. Heimdall was the only one gleaming - though his skin and braid were inky, his tail, helmet, and armor were all, ironically, a deep gold so impressive it was almost Asgardian. Thor found himself curiously meeting the man’s orange eyes for a moment, and flinched from the intensity of the glare he received. *All right, not all of them are boring*, Thor corrected himself as he pretended he was paying attention to the two kings greeting each other, *Though if he looks at me that way again I will have to settle him*.

He put Heimdall out of his mind as the pleasantries rambled on and began to search the crowd instead. First he searched the royal procession, then the noblemen, then the upper-class common folk, and even among the flute-players and fools, but nowhere in their little ocean of Vanir visitors could he catch a glimpse of Loki’s jaw, eyes, or freshly-wrought tail with its smooth black skin and golden fins. Nothing. Aegir was finishing his welcome speech, and Thor was expected to use

Mjolnir to signal the start of the celebration. Sif hissed in his ear when he missed his cue, and he waved her off impatiently. Unhappy, he lifted the hammer above his head and created a ball of sparkling lightning high above them that exploded to illuminate the festival scene below so brightly it almost seemed to be midday. With luck, the trick should last for a day or so, enough time to get the celebration into full swing. Vanir and Aesir alike were rushing towards the prepared halls to drink or game, and music erupted from four different corners of the city at once, but Thor was still distracted. Loki was nowhere to be seen, and he was sure that Loki would have a very difficult time finding his way in once the main gates were closed. A dozen thoughts ran through his head at once - he could be lost, he could have found the Vanir but been rejected or killed by them, he could have encountered unexpected wildlife and not been prepared to defend himself. He could have simply swum away in the opposite direction, free of Thor's imprisonment and eager to be rid of him. Thor was not permitted to lose himself in such thoughts, though, because Volstagg, Fandral, and even Hogun had descended on him.

"Captain of the guard, we beg you the indulgence of a few drinks." Fandral linked arms on the left.

"*Inside* the city you're meant to protect," Volstagg added, imposing his mighty weight on the right.

"And as your lieutenant, I order you to enjoy them, too," Sif snickered from behind him as she pushed on his back. Despite his distraction, Thor laughed, and put his arms around whoever he could grab. Loki would arrive soon enough. He was too clever and too strong to have died, and he wouldn't have run away. He loved him a little - at least, Thor had come to believe he did. The lateness must be part of his plan.

"I have no choice but to accept, my dearest friends. Let's make Aegir's festival a success so that Odin's war won't have to be."

With a cheer, they swam to the largest drinking hall, and the front gates of Asgard shut behind them.

—

The Loki-free feasting went on for more than three days before Thor started to feel truly agitated. Mostly he spent his time on patrol duty for Odin, who was nearly as hard to come by as Loki was, with constant absences. The party was going very, very well, and Thor despised it again for succeeding. People were getting along, drinking together, exchanging songs, and masks began to peel off and become discarded as comfortable friendships formed in groups of two or three or five. Every time he saw a smiling face, Vanir or Aesir, he wanted to punch it. Most ironic perhaps was the fact that he couldn't leave the city he was in charge of protecting from peaceful party-goers. The gates were sealed, and there were about triple as many guards as usual. Odin, as difficult as he was to find otherwise, always seemed to turn up exactly when Thor was trying to find a way to sneak off. On the fourth day, Thor at least found a quiet corner of one of the smallest mead halls to drink and sulk in peace. Frigga, who had been watching her eldest son's frustration out of the corner of her eye, interrupted his peaceful solitude almost as soon as he found it.

"I told you to make up with him," she said as she seated herself beside Thor on the otherwise abandoned bench. The mead halls of Asgard were underwater caves that were half full of air, almost like the great halls of the surface world. They sat on submerged benches and chairs while the drink was served in great casks on dry tables above water, and their voices carried in odd echoes when they spoke. Thor glared drunkenly at his wise, ancient, beautiful mother, and she laughed.

"You're right, I should not make light of your suffering. As warm as your heart is, you have never been one to give it away easily. This time is different. But perhaps your lover is planning

something grand and sweet for your reunion?”

“You misjudge me, mother. I would give my heart to this snake least of all. Still, I am angry he has run away, after all *else* I have given him.”

Frigga simply smiled her sweet smile and Thor let out a huff of exasperation.

“Come, we are needed at the main hall. Aegir and Njord are about to announce their toast of peace.”

“No. That sounds dull. The people are at peace already, and they won’t notice my absence.”

“Your father and I insist, *prince* Thor. Up you get, and do try to swim straight.”

—

The main hall was packed to bursting, which is exactly why Thor had been trying to avoid it. He did, after several of Frigga’s reminders, attempt to appear sober. He even properly adjusted his helmet when Sif gave him a particularly hard nudge in the ribs. The constant rounds of applause and blasts of conch horns were beginning to make his head throb, and after the noise was over he had to subject himself to the endless pompous droning of good will between the two cheery kings. Heimdall, as captain of the guard as well as vice-lord to the king, stood opposite him (Thor stood in for Odin, who was, again, mysteriously absent), and he could not have asked for a more unwelcome pair of eyes upon him at that moment. After his third time rubbing the bridge of his nose, Sif hissed in his ear.

“Are you a man or aren’t you? If you cannot even glare him down, he will think us all as weak and sloppy as you.”

“All that matters is that I could best him in combat, not a staring contest,” Thor grumpily muttered back, “I’ll let my father do the glaring when he returns.”

And just then, he did. Odin one-eye entered the teeming hall escorted by a dark-haired stranger clad in a spidery black mask studded with rubies and a tunic that seemed to be woven of black seaweed - but once Thor’s eyes trailed down as far as the tail he became sober and wide awake at once. Loki had arrived at last. Shouting a mixture of fury and relief in the middle of a peace ceremony might have been less than appropriate, so beyond a small muffled yelp that he hid behind his hand, he did his best to hold ranks under Sif’s scowling and Heimdall’s relentless glare.

“Peace be upon all of us, my king Aegir,” Odin spoke, “And especially on our esteemed guest and lord Njord of the Vanir. If I could beg your indulgence during this joyous time, I have become acquainted with a citizen who would propose a plan to seal a contract of good will for both Asgard and Vanaheim, permanently.”

Aegir looked both surprised and pleased at Odin’s sudden diplomacy. More than one in the crowd were murmuring in wonder at the appearance of this yet un-named ‘citizen’, who, while masked as the rest of them, seemed to hold himself just a bit differently, and whose tail cut the water lazily side to side instead of their own horizontal fins. Already furious with Loki for being late, and for showing up so suddenly and so publicly as to take him off guard, he became angry with everyone now daring to look at or comment on him as well. That others were daring to whisper about this oddity or that detail without his permission made his skin prickle with heat. Following Odin’s introduction, Aegir gestured Loki forward, and he approached (gracefully, when did he get this graceful in the water?) with a deep bow. As he lowered his head, Thor thought he caught his eye for an instant, and his own narrowed in impatience. He hoped that Loki could feel the glare that he

couldn't be bothered to spare Heimdall earlier.

"Your grace," Loki spoke softly, so that the thick crowd had to quiet in order to hear him. The hush of nearly a thousand mer-folk all focused on one strangely shaped and clad newcomer was almost eerie. "I have traveled a vast distance, so I beg your forgiveness if I am in any way rough or uncouth. My ocean is so ravaged by war and blood that we know little else. As I entered Asgard I nearly wept at the beauty I encountered, for it reminded me of a time I had all but forgotten - my own home long before the lust for battle and death overtook us all. I wish all the blessings on this banquet of yours, but feel that as many measures as possible should be taken to ensure good will, and love between your people as the brothers they are. Therefore I would propose to you a peaceful exchange of blood."

Aegir smiled and stroked his beard at this last pronouncement, and Njord leaned forward with concern.

"My sympathies for your pains, but you seem to speak a contradiction, stranger. What is 'peaceful blood', exactly?"

"Vanaheim will give to Asgard one of its finest citizens - and Asgard will give to Vanaheim the same. Each city will gain what it lacks, and war will be avoided."

"You are a bit uncouth, as you said," Njord grunted, "What do we lack, exactly?"

Loki appeared to look demure and thoughtful, and Thor ground his teeth as he watched him. How had he squirmed his way so quickly into Odin's good graces? What was the meaning of this peaceful blood nonsense? Loki did not look his way, and Thor gripped Mjolnir in an attempt to steady himself, noticing through instinct that Heimdall's hold on his glittering pike was tense as well.

"To fill the gaps in Vanir culture, Asgard will offer to Vanaheim their Librarian, Mimir. He has wisdom in subjects so vast and varied that Vanaheim will be able to increase in size, wealth, beauty until she is able to surpass Asgard herself."

Every member of the crowd began to tense and chatter at this point, and Thor felt a sharp stab of offense as well. Peace with Vanaheim was all well and good, but to surpass Asgard, the most powerful, most advanced, and certainly most cultured city in all the nine seas, was ridiculous. Meanwhile he could hear the Vanir complain that the stranger was speaking low of them, speaking as if they were undeveloped brutes. Loki continued as if oblivious to the fact that most of the hall now hated him.

"And Vanaheim will offer to Asgard Heimdall, for their protection."

As quickly as it had started, the chattering quieted down. No one, Aesir or Vanir, seemed to want to comment on something that challenged Heimdall directly. Until that point Heimdall's face had been stony and unreadable as a rock, but upon Loki's pronouncement it twisted with such shock and horror that Thor was forced to break the silence by bursting into sudden, and intensely disrespectful laughter. Heimdall turned his glare in his direction again, and Thor mostly contained himself, but his amusement still lingered in his eyes and around the corners of his mouth. Loki smiled as well; a perfect mask of indulgent decency, and Aegir and Njord put their heads together as they thought over Loki's plan. They nodded together, and Aegir once again raised his voice and silenced the murmuring crowd.

"We will consider your words, stranger - but on the condition that you give us your name and lineage. After all, we cannot accept counsel from a creature we do not know."

Loki bowed again, and the playful smirk that Thor was more familiar with showed for an instant beneath his glittering black-and-ruby mask.

“I am called Loki, and I am of the line of Odin, through my late mother in the Southern Sea.”

At this Thor’s pulse skipped, and (forgetting proper soldierly conduct entirely), he turned to look at his mother. Frigga seemed to have been studying Loki ever since he entered the hall, and she stood in the water primly without even a tiny crack in her smooth exterior. In fact, after digesting his pronouncement for several long moments, she smiled, and interrupted Thor’s rush to protest by swimming forward to Loki’s side.

“It seems we have even more cause for celebration than before, if my family is to grow by a member as well. My beloved Lords,” she addressed the two kings, “We have had much talk, and it is time for more merriment. If I could be honored by your presence at the music hall in a little over an hour’s time, we can digest both words and mead over music.”

“I have heard much of your singing, lady Frigga!” Njord responded in excitement, “I will be happy to attend.” Heimdall still looked furious, though he did not seem to know where to channel his anger, and cast his glare from Thor, to Odin, to Njord himself, and mostly, almost hesitantly, on strange Loki. Mimir, as far as Thor could tell, was nowhere in the hall at all. He was probably buried under a pile of books somewhere, muttering curses about unruly merry-makers, and quite unaware of his fate. Aegir dismissed the crowd with a grand gesture, and by the time Thor had gathered his wits enough to cast about for any part of Loki he could grab, both he and Frigga had vanished entirely. Mjolnir, as irritated as he was, came free from his belt into his palm, and the water surrounding him sizzled. Sif, finally seeing fit to break rank and face him properly, cuffed him sharply over the head.

“You ass, be careful with that thing, or you’ll end up frying us all. How do you know that man?”

“How could I possibly know him? I’ve never seen him before.”

“Thor.”

“I cannot tell you. Yet. I must deal with him privately first.”

“It seems that your dear mother has made first claim on dealing with him privately. Shall we catch up with them at the concert?” Fandral had appeared at his elbow, and Hogun materialized as well, but Volstagg had already gone ahead with his wife and children.

Insufferable, Thor thought to himself with a growl as he swam ahead with no regard for whether his friends could keep up. *Insufferable, slippery, treacherous little whore. Now that he’s here, I’ll remind him why.*

—

“May I have a word?” The concert hall was dim and Frigga’s performance was nearing its peak. In complete disregard for etiquette Thor had spent the entire first act of the play searching the crowd, and he had finally found his new ‘brother’ in his family’s own private booth, calmly chatting with Balder while Odin sat by impassively. Thor bit out a smile that could have shattered glass, and Loki looked up from his quiet conversation as if he were blandly surprised to see him.

“You may. As it happens, Balder and I were just discussing how I came to find Asgard after all these years. Were you curious as well?”

“May I have a word with you, Loki, in private?” Mjolnir hissed warningly by his side, but still

Loki's bland smile persisted.

"We are in the middle of your honored mother's performance, prince Thor. I wouldn't want to disrespect her by leaving before the opera has ended."

Enough was enough. Thor disregarded Balder and Odin alike, and leaned in close enough that he knew the breath from his gills would be hot on Loki's cheek as he growled in his ear.

"If you are truly *that* determined to make yourself unfit for my attention, then by all means - whore yourself to the entirety of the city, and I will never. Touch you. Again."

Loki's expression seemed to be blank, but Thor was too wise to fall for that anymore. The black in Loki's eyes widened, the soft curve of his throat hitched, and his jaw tightened as a few of his pearly teeth dug into his narrow lower lip. Thor had seen enough, and withdrew from Loki to swim abruptly away. Halfway to his tower he caught sight of Loki's shimmering silhouette catching up to him from behind, and grinned in predatory victory as he sped forward to force Loki to give chase.

They didn't make it all the way to Thor's room before they began tangling. As soon as Loki caught up, he grabbed hold of Thor's hair and *pulled* - Thor slammed Loki into the wall and slid with him to the floor as their bodies twisted into a slippery knot of red and black. Loki's strength as a human had been, for the most part, inconsequential. But he was stronger like this - more flexible, and more difficult to pin. The moment Thor thought he had him he would duck under his arm to begin leaving teeth marks on his shoulder and back. They tore at each other's faces with rough bites and kisses, and somehow they managed to get through the door without breaking it or leaving it open. Thor was relentless then, and finally got Loki on his front by slamming his weight into him hard enough to force a choked whine out of Loki's throat. They lay panting, Thor's fingernails leaving red marks on Loki's pale skin, until Loki groaned and went limp with breathless laughter. Thor grinned in return, and bit Loki's ear fondly as his previously tense hands moved to lovingly run over the buttery skin of Loki's smooth eel-hide rear and tail.

"That's more like it, you infernal tease. How *dare* you announce yourself to Asgard - to *my* kingdom without conferring with me first?"

"How could I possibly have concentrated on - *ah* - tactics with you nearby? Animals such as yourself are fun when it comes time to play, but I could hardly have delivered a speech to your king while being mounted."

"*Careful*, lie-spinner, or I'll turn you inside out after satiating myself." Thor traced his fingertips along the edge of the mask that was still bound neatly to Loki's face, and the hint of a smirk had just managed to pull at Loki's lips when Thor realized what he was looking at. What Thor had taken at a distance to be rubies were actually, his own scales, now perversely woven into the black and red latticework of Loki's mask.

"Before you start bellowing," Loki said breathlessly, "I read all of those books you gave me, so I am fully aware that wearing another's body parts is a terribly insulting affront in your culture. Additionally, both of our backgrounds seem to agree that," he paused for breath as Thor's fingers re-tightened on a fistful of his hair, craning his neck back to a painfully sharp curve, "Wearing... a piece of someone else marks them as your property. It claims them." He purred this so unabashedly that Thor was barely able to retain enough control of his arms to avoid snapping his pretty white neck. Instead he grinned, and let the weeks of frustration and restraint crash into him. It struck him how very fitting it was that Loki now had the body of a serpent, and how delightful it felt in his palms, arms, and hardening cock to physically restrain the true form of slippery, insidious,

manipulative Loki. He undid the mask with his teeth and whispered, dangerously soft, in his reddened ear.

“I will ruin you, Loki. Make any false claim of ownership that you like; it will slide past me like a breeze. I gave you this form, I brought you here, *I own you*, and after tonight you will be so marked by my touch and my love that every other thought in that quick, tricky mind of yours will be Thor, Thor, Thor.”

Loki breathed deeper and harsher as each word passed, and Thor’s chest filled with smug satisfaction - he had rendered him speechless. Thor fitted himself tight behind Loki’s smooth, shivering back, and let his empty hand slide warm and hot down Loki’s chest, to his belly, to his already waiting cock, trapped beneath both of their weights. Loki’s eyes fluttered half shut, and Thor snorted in amusement.

“Not much has changed here, I see.”

Loki’s voice was thick as he softly rutted against Thor’s hand, his hands tense fists in front of him betraying his tension.

“I happen to be proud of my cock, sea-beast...I tamed *you* with it, after all.”

“We’ll have to avoid giving it too much attention, then.” He pulled Loki with him to lay on his side, and slid his hand free of Loki’s cock to claw into his belly instead.

“Show me your cunt, Loki,” he murmured, “Open yourself up for me.”

Loki panted wordlessly at first, then licked his lips slowly as he allowed his shivering body to melt against Thor’s. He ran his fingertips past his own cock to the smooth black eelskin it was protruding from, and began to dig his fingertips carefully on either side of what seemed to be solid flesh. Finally, with a breathless sigh of pleasure, his slit began to open, pink and glistening against his black tail, and Thor brushed one of Loki’s hands away with a swipe of his broad thumb. Loki’s tail twitched in a full-body shudder, and he choked off a mewl when Thor began to bury his fingertips into him.

“I had thought to myself, Loki,” Thor said as he worked softly panting Loki open little by little, “What I should do to you first, when I finally had you in my grasp. But I’m not the only one that missed you...there’s someone else who has a craving for your flesh that hasn’t been fed yet.” Loki looked over his shoulder, but before he could ask, Thor had unstrapped Mjolnir from his belt, and brought the blunt, leather-bound tip of her handle to gently kiss the Loki’s shivering pussy. “What do you say? Will you accept this lady’s overture?”

Loki swallowed, seeming to struggling with words again, but after a shivering hesitation, he placed both of his palms slowly over the hammer’s carved head, and with a stifled gasp, bucked his hips forward to let the tip of her handle bury itself in his cunt. Thor felt a charge go through the hammer the moment she penetrated Loki, and, with a smirk, as he slid the handle in deeper, he could feel the thrumming electricity of her flow through Loki’s body as his cunt swallowed her up inch by inch.

“Ah,” Loki gasped out, still nearly incoherent. “Ah-it...she...”

“Do you like her as much as she likes you?” Thor’s cock was painfully hard, fully free of his sheath and twitching against Loki’s shivering eel-smooth backside, but he put it in the back of his mind as he fucked Loki slowly with the hammer’s shaft. Every few strokes she let out a stronger pulse that made Loki whimper in a sound half pain and half abandon.

“Yes,” Loki breathed, barely audible between his rough pants, “Yes...ah-” He pressed both his hands tight to Mjolnir’s head to try and sink her in deeper, which made her purr, but only Thor was able to move her. He fucked Loki’s to a twitching climax once, and then again while ignoring his breathy protests and then again, with Loki half-pinned to his front this time, his weight falling on the thick hammer shaft as Thor clawed marks into his slick eel hide. Only then did he finally draw the hammer out of Loki’s thoroughly fucked hole, and lay him flat on his back to see him in more entirety.

”A rest,” Loki finally begged, his eyes red from tears that seawater had washed away, “Wait.”

“I am *through* waiting,” Thor answered, and tossed Mjolnir to the side with a spectacular crash. He bit Loki’s mouth, his jaw, his throat. He traced each of Loki’s new gills with his flat and heavy tongue and quieted Loki’s exhausted mewl when the tip of his wanting cock finally sought out his cunt. Loki’s hands were both viciously tangled in Thor’s hair and he was heaving deep, unpracticed breaths that were doing little to ease his exhaustion.

“Wait,” he rasped again, and Thor kissed him warmly before plunging into him. Eager need overcame all Thor’s other instincts as Loki’s still-twitching cunt start to swallow him up. But he noticed something...not quite right, even in the hazy state of pure desire he had driven himself to. Or it was *too* right - Loki was taking him too well, too deep, and when the tapered tip of his cock searched for anchor as Thor stickily pressed his body flat and tight against Loki’s squirming tail, he found it, and latched into what was unmistakably an entirely female organ. Loki was wheezing, the figure of grace and poise he had been in the mead hall had transformed into another creature entirely. His neatly plaited hair was swirling about his reddened cheeks and his black-threaded tunic was in satisfying tatters. After fully latching into the tight, twitching depths of his cunt, Thor feigned enough gentleness to lift Loki’s chin so his sex-fogged eyes could meet his own.

“Every bit as much a woman as you are a man now, is that it?”

Loki swallowed, and smirked at him through his panting.

“Of course. I did swallow her womb for a reason.”

“I hope you enjoy the results.” Thor breathed, and clawed tight enough into Loki’s sleek hip that he gasped in discomfort. Then he began to squirm again, his eyes rolling back, as Thor pinned him in place to force him to receive the rest of his cock. “Lucky, lucky minx. Do you feel the difference?” When he had fucked him as a human, as a man, his cock had coiled aimlessly and latched itself onto whatever bend of flesh it could find to hold him steady. This time, Loki’s cunt fit him like it was designed to, and his cock tip anchored deep inside of him in a tight ring of flesh that held him steady. Every twitch and thrash of his cock was met with an answering squeeze and pull of Loki’s insides - Thor would pull back, and Loki’s cunt would pull him right back in. Loki uttered a series of breathless gasps ending in a whimper, and when Thor looked back to his face, he was shaking all over, his black tail now coiled around Thor out of desperation rather than struggle. Thor kissed his forehead, and his cheek, and murmured his question to him again.

“Do you feel it?”

“Yes...I feel it...” Loki choked out, and thunder rumbled so deep from the surface above them that Thor could feel it in his bones. “It’s perfect.”

—

They weren’t finished until it was well past daylight the next morning. Several things were broken, most notably the bed, which had not lasted once they had finally gotten on top of it. Mjolnir had

cheerfully smashed an armoire and bent a sword into uselessness, which, fairly, was a less worthy weapon than she was. A chunk of wall was cracked, and they were both, finally, at least momentarily, exhausted. They lay on the sagging mattress in its broken frame, unwilling to move, and Loki broke the sleepy silence with a hoarse drawl.

“You know I could be with child because of this. I read all about it in the books you brought me. You, my thundering prince, have no womb, but you have put me in grave danger.”

“Danger,” Thor replied with a derisive snort, “That ‘danger’ drove you to climax as many as six times tonight, I would wager gold on it.”

“A prince, but not a gentleman.”

“I will not be gentle with *you*, tricky Loki. If there is a child, then I will be gentle.”

“And happy?”

Thor thought for a moment, and though Loki could not see it, with his back to his chest and his eyes closed, his smile was nearly foolish in its intensity.

“Happy...that is a weak word for what I would be. Sleep now, tomorrow is another day.”

“It is tomorrow already, and I cannot withstand another day like *this*.”

“You *could*, but I have something else to show you. Something almost as good.”

“Is that even *possible*, brute prince of virility?”

“Rest your tongue for half a second, Loki.”

“I will when you sing for me.”

Thor smiled, nearly asleep.

“Tomorrow. Tomorrow is another day.”

Chapter End Notes

Holy crap it's only been a day since I put this up but SovietGod did an [amazing \(NSFW\) illustration](#), and MrHiddles did an [equally incredible \(SFW\) illustration](#)!

Editing again to add Schaudwen's breathtaking and extremely NSFW mer-Thor/mer-Loki version of [The Kiss](#), and Kyuubi's [gorgeously atmospheric sketches](#) I can't believe I'm this lucky...I still keep pinching myself.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Apples grow in orchards, and the stars are in your blood.

Loki struggled, groggy and sore, into wakefulness, registering before anything else the solid weight of strong arms circling his body. He breathed soft water through his hoarse throat, and opened heavy eyes to the blurry sight of a softly glowing arched ceiling. He blinked mutely at it for a moment, uncomprehending of where he was, and then turned towards the sound of a sleepy moan, and his fogged mind caught up with him as he took in Thor's sleeping face. He seemed to be concentrating very hard on sleep, and Loki smiled as he ran a narrow fingertip over one of his thick, tense brows. Thor grunted in his sleep, and his gold hair fluttered away from the air released by his gills.

With warm satisfaction in his belly, Loki loosened Thor's arms enough so that he could sit upright. He was dryly surprised to discover he had sustained no broken bones or torn fins. He was peppered with purple bruises and red bite-marks, but he hadn't been ripped in two or permanently maimed, and with as much care as Thor had shown the night before, it was a very real relief. With some slightly less than dignified squirming, he pulled his sleek tail free of Thor's grip, and surveyed the room.

The bed itself was cracked down the center, which Thor, still slumbering in a disheveled ball of pale skin and red scales, didn't seem to mind at all. The shattered remains of an armoire sagged against one wall, and a collection of shields spilled carelessly beneath a standing lamp bent at a precarious angle. Most impressively there was a jagged hole in the ceiling and eastern wall, and the gap was letting in a warm beam of green light from the surface. Now that it was morning, Loki could more adequately appreciate how well Thor's chamber was positioned to take in the passing of the day. Much of the ocean had no sense of time at all - just the cool consistent blue of dark water and lantern stones. Here the water almost magnified the light, and the green morning reflected brightly off of the golden walls and broken crystal dusting the floor.

A particularly bright gleam of light turned out to be a miraculously unbroken looking-glass next to the pathetic armoire. He stood in front of it, and paused to take in his transformed figure. Although he had observed himself thoroughly while still living in Thor's cave, it had been with nothing but action on his mind - on gaining access to Asgard, on finding Odin and earning a limited, priceless morsel of his trust. Now he could truly appreciate that he was in the grand (half destroyed) chambers of a crown prince, and he fitted the picture perfectly. He looked as if he belonged here, as if he had lived here all his life. He gave himself a cat-like grin as he vainly congratulated himself on his camouflage. It was a gift in which he had always been unparalleled, and this was indisputable proof.

He swept his floating hair back into a loose plait behind his head, which made his appearance mildly more respectable. With a quick glance at Thor slumbering in the cradle of his demolished bed, Loki turned his eyes upward, and swam through the shattered ceiling to survey the city.

On the floor of the ocean, Asgard was enormously majestic. It surrounded its occupants on all sides by spires and arches and glowing doors and gardens. Thor's tower was one of the highest in

the city, however, and from above Asgard was almost a trick to look at. By design, the meticulously crafted city was shaded with sea-moss, coral, and stones as dull and slimy as the ones the surface had to offer. It was clearly a measure meant to keep the underwater paradise hidden from curious surface-dwellers, but it only seemed half necessary. There was not so much as a ripple above his head; no sign of human life for the miles of the clear blue surface he could see.

No one aside from himself was reckless enough to put this far out to sea above such pitiless depths. The memory of his trip blurred into focus with a small clench of his stomach. The ice and chill crusting on his furs and settling in his eyelashes. The assured descent of death. Thor's golden head and red scales from nowhere, putting blood back into his veins.

He clenched his teeth to keep his pulse from increasing, to keep his thoughts from racing away from him. The city was sleepy and silent. It was too quiet. For a moment, he considered returning to Thor's bed and waking him, but then a subtle hint of moving gold flashed in the corner of his eye. When he saw it again, he recognized the shape, and his mouth curled in a slow smile before he swam to higher water to join his early-rising companion.

"Good morning, honorable Heimdall," Loki said smoothly, as he slid his snake-like body inside the gazebo topping the highest tower of Asgard. "Did you sleep well?" Heimdall was facing the view of half-visible Asgard with his back to him, and did not respond.

"Did you sleep at all?" Loki tried again, irked by his silence, "Or did you spend the night contemplating your new life? You seem like a man of deep thought."

"You called yourself Loki, did you not?" Heimdall's voice was slow and rumbling, and Loki snaked further into the chamber so that he could see his face. When the man's orange eyes did finally turn on him, Loki felt his skin prickle with scrutinized discomfort, and he slowly crossed his arms over his love-marked torso.

"I did. Possibly because it is my name," he replied sweetly. "I am charmed that you remember."

Heimdall was silent for a while more, and then said something, quiet and slow, in a language Loki did not recognize. His mouth flattened. He had just spent eight sleepless nights and ten sleepless days perfecting the language that Thor spoke underwater, flexing and strengthening his pronunciation through gills he had conjured out of thin air. Encountering a foreign tongue so soon was a bit maddening, especially since he was not sure whether he could be expected to understand it or not.

"Forgive me. I'm from very distant waters."

At this, Heimdall smiled. His orange eyes narrowed, and each of his teeth glowed golden in his mouth. Loki realized with unease that he had assumed Heimdall to be an existence of stony stoicism. Discovering that he had humor and pleasure in him was...disturbing.

"Yes. Very distant. No matter. If it is Loki you still wish to be called on the day I end your existence, it is Loki you will be remembered."

He turned away, and serenely contemplated the landscape again, this time with a peaceful smile tugging at his lips. Loki felt white heat quicken in his veins with a sudden and consuming hatred. It wasn't the threat of being killed that bothered him; Loki had lost count of the number of times he had inspired men and women to threaten him with murder and dismemberment. There was something *unnatural* about Heimdall, about his calm, his plodding words, and his deep, patient assurance - something incomprehensible. The skin of his hands began to prickle as instinct eclipsed sense, and just as he formed a hex on the tip of his tongue, the distant sound of Thor's voice

shattered his hot crystal of a moment.

With a sharp inhale, he came quickly, dizzyingly, to the rational understanding that attacking Heimdall would damage his extremely delicate reputation, and that it would be best not to. Infuriated, speechless, and just a little bewildered, he was only able to deliver Heimdall a parting glare before smoothly diving from the high platform to re-join Thor in the city.

He wished Heimdall hadn't raised his hand to wave as he went. More than farewell, it seemed to burn into his mind the greeting: "I'll see you again."

"Keep quiet," Thor whispered, his eyes gleeful with childish mischief as he pulled Loki along by the wrist. His palm was very warm against his skin and Loki gratefully let his rage towards Heimdall drain away. They swam together in comfortable silence until they neared the center of the city. Loki observed, after having seen the city both from above and along the ground, that Asgard formed a gentle spiral within towering, albeit useless walls that all swept inwards toward a dome in the center of the round city. That dome was where Thor had led him now. Directly before them was an enormous golden gate, carved intricately into lattice woven from golden leaves and women's faces in every possible expression, all merging in the center in a solid gold sphere. Thor released his hold on Loki's wrist, and with a conspiratorial grin, pressed Mjolnir to the sphere. It let out a soft hiss in protest, then creaked open far enough so that they were just able to slip inside. Behind the gate, there was a tunnel, broad and grand, and as they swam forward they left the blue light of the ocean floor behind, but not to meet darkness up ahead. Light poured towards them - mellow, buttery light the type of which Loki had heard of existing in warm, southern countries, but had never experienced in the frigid ones he had spent his life in so far.

Suddenly, everything was golden and green. They *were* still in the ocean, Loki thought to himself, made a bit dizzy by the overwhelming presence of magic that so greatly dwarfed his own. The interior of the giant dome was an orchard beneath a cloudless midday sky. The ground was carpeted by lightly buffeted sea-grass, and surrounding them were plants of the sea as well as many trees, flowers, and vines that had no business thriving underwater. And yet each specimen was greener, somehow, more beautiful, and more exact than they would have been in their rightful place.

"Where have you brought me this time?" he asked in quiet amazement. Thor grinned, and kept his voice low as he responded.

"This is the orchard of Idunn, and technically we are trespassing. I brought you here to give you something that will undo your troubles."

Thor swam further into the orchard, and Loki followed carefully behind, still gripped with wonder. He watched him swim into the boughs of the largest tree in the life-swollen orchard. Its silver-barked trunk was so enormously thick that Loki thought it might take the better part of an hour to swim around it, and its branches dripped low from a distant height until they brushed the grass, heavy with golden fruit. Thor returned from the tree's thick branches with an arm full of these, and held one out to him with a glowing smile of triumph. Loki reached forward to take it, and it was warm in his palm, its temperature matching the richness of its color. It resembled an apple most closely out of the fruits he had encountered so far, but it was lightly segmented so that it seemed meant to be taken apart into pieces.

And shared, Loki thought slowly to himself, the thought automatic.

"This fruit," Thor said quietly, after waiting for Loki to take it in, "is our source of eternal life. The

secret of our godhood lies in this plant. We are seldom allowed to say this out loud, but..." Thor paused, as if he had been preparing himself for this part, but was still having difficulty making the forbidden words pass his lips. "It is true that any mortal being who eats this can become immortal and godlike, like us."

This had to be too good to be true. It was too simple, too *quaint*. The incredible biology of Thor's people contained evidence and mystery enough for him to believe that they were immortal, or at least that they exceeded all reasonable limitations of longevity, through anomalies that were naturally born to them. To learn that this was a trait purchased instead from this fruit, and moreover that *he* could purchase it as easily as taking a bite, was beyond incredible. Loki breathed in through his strange gills and held the fruit close to his nose, even though he perceived the scent through his throat. This would have to be done correctly.

"How many can we carry away from here?"

Thor frowned uncomfortably, and his eyes darted to the entrance and around the brilliantly lit, quiet, empty orchard.

"I did not mean to carry any away. One will last you for a hundred years at least, and my people will allow you your own by that time. You should eat it now, it's fully ripe."

"I don't doubt its ripeness," Loki said with a smirk, passing the fruit between his long-fingered hands fondly, "But I won't take any chances with this curse of mine. I want to be at the deepest point in the ocean when I eat it - as close to buried as I can be. I cannot cure my curse without facing it."

Thor's brows knit, and he opened his mouth for a moment as if he was about to be angry, but with a frustrated huff it eased away from him. Instead, he sunk into thoughtfulness for a moment with his eyes darting rapidly from side to side.

"The catacombs," he said slowly, "Though we will have to wait for father to depart with the Vanir in three days. He has only even allowed me inside when he is there to escort."

The cautious, even fearful way that Thor spoke sent a shiver down Loki's spine. Yes. That would be the place.

"Three nights from now, then. We will go there together." Loki realized that he was shivering, and Thor looked at him with concern when he took the apple back, his fingertips lingering on his slender wrist. Loki shook his head to ward it off, and smiled. For once in his life, the only words that could seem to pass his lips were the truth.

"Until now I have been complacent in the simple truth of my impending demise. What you're offering me is hope...and that is far more terrifying."

The exit ceremonies of their honored Vanir guests were nearly as grand and overdone as their welcoming brigade. All the Vanir gathered (with the notable exception of Heimdall, who was granted the astonishingly disrespectful request of absence by his lenient king) in ranks or carriages or schools of cheerfully swimming bodies outside the main gates of Asgard. Njord's ancient steed of a whale was led into open water to wait for him.

Mimir had at first been deeply affronted by Loki's proposed plan. To carelessly swap him, the wisest of all Aesir, for a barbaric source of destruction such as Heimdall! He had fumed and

refused to budge from his private chamber in the library, and would talk to no one. During all the continued merry goings-on, however, he had an unexpected visit from the Vanir prince, Freyr. The boy was fifteen, but he showed little interest in the manly arts of drinking, hunting, and sporting like his father and most of the Vanir and Aesir partygoers. Instead, after hearing the name of Mimir spoken, he politely requested directions to the Asgard Library, and had since spent dozens of patient, quiet hours first gently pleading for and then drinking in the wisdom and poetry that Mimir had to offer. He declared the librarian the most incredible creature he had ever met, and shyly asked if he could possibly read books that he himself had written. Mimir had not written any books just yet, though he felt that for young Freyr, he might be obligated to. In his farewell to Aegir he said:

“If the future of the Vanir is to soon be entrusted to prince Freyr, then Asgard will have nothing to fear from Vanaheim. He is a sweet boy, clever, and reasonable, and I will be honored to become his tutor.”

When they were about to depart, Thor noticed that his father, who had been appointed head of the escort troop, was absent. Had he been re-assigned at the last moment? Or had his honorable sire suddenly found it in himself to shirk duty? If Odin did not depart as anticipated, there would be no trip to the catacombs, that much was certain. Thor excused himself to search the streets and halls directly inside of the city, and to his relief he came quietly upon Odin inside one of the inns close to the front gate. His relief turned quickly to puzzlement, however, when he observed him speaking low and urgent to another figure in the shadows, a conspiratorial scene he could not fully make out. With an uncharacteristic effort of caution, he remained hidden so that he could peer beyond the tense, aged back of his father to discover, in a glimpse of sleek black and fluttering gold, that his companion in inaudible conversation was Loki. Thor felt his face burn hot around his eyes, and the brief spell of caution deserted him. He cleared his throat loudly, and the hushed voices ceased immediately. Odin threw a critical, one-eyed glare over his shoulder, and if Loki was surprised, he had time to mask the expression before Thor could see his face.

“By your leave, then,” Thor heard him murmur in Odin’s direction, before turning with barely a look at Thor and disappearing into one of the nearby doors. If Thor had been incensed before, this made it several times worse.

“I had been meaning to ask you,” Thor started, barely managing to keep from grinding his teeth, “How, exactly, you and Loki came to know each other so well.”

Odin was quiet for several moments before he spoke plainly.

“And I had been meaning to ask you, Thor, whether you’ve finally dropped your nasty habit of interbreeding. The surface world will thank you almost as much as I will, I’m sure, if Loki can keep your attentions away from it.”

Thor fumed, and a childish pout creased his face. “What I do privately is my own affair.”

“No,” Odin replied, with flat iciness, “As my son, what you do is my responsibility and therefore details of it are my right. What *I* do privately is my own affair.”

Odin swam towards the exit Thor had come in through, but Thor, almost in danger of heaving from the revolting potential intimacy of this conspiracy, put a disrespectful hand on his father’s shoulder to stop him.

“Do you honestly believe Loki to be your son, father? Or is it a scheme the two of you hatched together?”

Odin paused, and fixed Thor with a nearly unreadable look.

He's deciding whether I'm too stupid to be let in on his secret, Thor bristled, He thinks me simple when his sly little partner is my own discovery, practically my own creation. Mine.

"It is a scheme," Odin said quietly, "It is clear that scheming is his greatest talent, so I made use of it."

Thor calmed a little. There was no denying that scheming was Loki's greatest talent, though his wording still made him uneasy. Odin was examining him carefully, and in the end seemed displeased.

"Watch out for yourself, boy," he said, with an awkward warmth. "If you are already in love, fall out of it. He will cherish your sentiments only as far as he can wound you with them."

Too astonished to reply, Thor stood stunned as his father clapped him genially on the shoulder and then he was gone. Thor remained in solitude long enough to count the many archways in the dim inn hall before Fandral swam in to urge him to see the Vanir off.

"It's a cave, Thor. You have a cave. You kept me jailed in it for nearly a month. What are you afraid of?"

They had been hesitating, each holding one of the pale blue stones that scattered around the cave entrance like petrified eggs, because Thor was nearly overcome with a powerful, inexplicable dread at the prospect of entering the cavern mouth. In Odin's absence there seemed to be an extra protection around this dangerous place, and Thor was becoming irritated that Loki was so casually unaffected. Perhaps it was because he was not truly of the sea. Perhaps it was because he was not truly of Odin's blood. Either way, Thor was having second thoughts about their excursion.

"We'll find another cavern," he said doubtfully. "Somewhere deeper."

Loki breathed exasperated water against his shoulder, and just as Thor had begun their trip to Idunn's orchard, he took hold of Thor's wrist and pulled them both fluidly into the forbidden catacombs.

With Loki's firm hand pulling him forward, Thor's dread eased at first. After swimming on in darkness long enough for the faint glow of golden Asgard to disappear behind them, though, the dread returned, and became incrementally more unbearable. Each way he looked was black, and not the comforting, mysterious, promising black of the deep sea or his own caverns. It was a finite black, a black to end things. There was a presence here, almost as if the myriad of tunnels that Loki continued to pull him through were the twisting intestines of some monster, some creature as old as the earth itself. Perhaps these were the bowels of *the* earth itself, slithering out of the core of the planet like an enormous worm to breathe stale death on his cheek.

"Do you know the way back?" Thor asked, because he certainly did not, and was attempting not to panic. As powerful as he was, as powerful as Mjolnir was, if he unleashed any such show of strength in here, it would only serve to bury them in dead rock and suffocate them.

"No," Loki replied, and Thor was alarmed to discover that although his fingers had been steady, his voice was trembling. "I know the way forward."

Thor said nothing, and after a few more moments, he wound his thick fingers around Loki's wrist, to mark that they were together, and he was not merely being pulled along. As they swam deeper,

the water became grimy and thick, and breathing became more and more difficult. Thor had not been keeping track of how long they had been swimming in the black, but he knew that they were far, far deeper than the spherical room that Odin had gifted Mjolnir to him in.

Deeper, Thor thought to himself, seeking just a little comfort from the satchel of apples he had strapped over his shoulder. *The deepest point possible. Perhaps the center of the planet itself.*

“Almost,” Loki whispered.

“How will you know?” Thor asked with a shiver, blinking through water that was so murky even the light of their lantern stones was becoming obscured, and the sparse bubbles of air it still contained were groggy and undisturbed, as the water was too thick for them to burst. “How far is deep enough?”

Loki was pulling him forward in broken spurts now, and did not respond right right away, so intense was his strain to breathe. Eventually he paused, and Thor stilled him with the hand clasping his wrist, and wound his other arm around his waist. Loki looked at him in the dim light of the lantern he was still holding and smiled a sick, tired grin.

“We’ll be deep enough when my heart stops beating.”

This he would not stand to hear. Loki tried to pull away and move onward, but Thor snarled and held him fast.

“We have gone far enough,” he said, his head aching from lack of air. “I will do the rest.”

“No, further in...”

“*Enough*, Loki. I did not follow you this far to watch you commit elaborate suicide. I will take charge of your destiny now.”

Loki resisted, and though they were both weak from lack of air, Thor had Mjolnir on his side, and as he forced the squirming trickster to the cold ground she slipped from his belt to land snugly on his belly. His face, when softly illuminated by her glow, was twisted in agonized fury, but Thor’s eyes blazed with their own glare in the darkness which more than matched it. Thor pulled one of the apples from his satchel and with the knife he had taken from Loki the night he had brought him into the sea, he cut a thick wedge out of it. The fruit’s soft interior was vulnerable in such polluted water, and it began to break apart almost at once. Thor put it quickly into his own mouth and without pause crushed his mouth against his captive’s with bruising force. Loki closed his eyes with a choked growl of protest, and then was tensely quiet. As Thor pushed the sweet, slippery morsels of fruit past Loki’s sharp, resisting teeth, he wrapped his fingers about Loki’s throat to be sure he was swallowing. He kept going, tearing the fruit into chunks and ignoring the ache in his head and lungs, until the entire apple had been passed from his lips into Loki’s mouth.

After it was gone they both breathed quietly, shallowly, in the darkness. Sometime while he had been feeding him, Loki had wrapped his pale arms and sleek, sinewy tail tight around Thor’s body, and was now holding him down almost as effectively as he himself was trapped. A long moment went by.

“Mm...the water feels a little less heavy,” Loki finally said. Thor jumped with a pleased start, surprised to hear his voice sound so clear.

“Are you well?” he asked, “Has the fruit lifted your curse?”

“No,” Loki said, and he sounded so bitter that for a moment Thor thought that it had all been for

nothing. “The curse has been lifted, there’s no doubt about that...but it was you forcing it on me that did the work.”

Thor’s eyes narrowed, and the fingers he still had on Loki’s throat tightened bruisingly.

“You knew that I would have to *force* you in order to lift the curse?”

Loki winced from Thor’s grip, but he returned a sharp, nasty grin. “You are such a wise, *clever* animal. Of course I didn’t know. I know it *now*, in the same way...that one who has been sleeping knows they are awake. If I had known beforehand...” Some of the bitterness was easing out of Loki’s voice now, replaced by dark humor. “How could you possibly have forced me?”

“Not now, Loki,” Thor groaned, suddenly aware of how tight Loki’s grip on him was, and how warm his thin limbs were. “Anywhere but here.”

Loki’s eyes gleamed with restrained mirth, but he dropped his teasing. Instead he lay his head back, closed his eyes, and breathed as deep as he could in the stale, dense, nearly toxic water. Thor watched as all evidence of seduction and trickery left his face, and a calm took its place that he had never seen before. Mjolnir murmured happily that she could feel Loki’s heartbeat beneath her surface.

It’s a lovely sound, sighed she, *I’ve never heard it before.*

“So,” Thor said again, very softly, “Are you well?”

Loki was so still for a moment that Thor thought he had stopped breathing, but after another beat he opened his eyes, and, unsmiling, said:

“I am well, Thor. And if I could, I’d like to ask for your expertise...how does one act when they are well?”

Having granted Loki his immortality, they were faced with the much more immediate issue of escaping the catacombs so that they could adequately enjoy it. After disentangling their bodies from each other, Loki held himself upright in the water with his head cocked to the side, as if he were listening for something. Just as he was about to ask what it was, Loki flashed him a silent look of urgency and then turned, not down the way they had come, nor the downward slope that he had been attempting to tug them along previously, but down a third passage Thor had not seen in the blackness. Cursing Loki’s swiftness, Thor had no choice but to follow a seemingly illogical series of twists and turns that, while they did lead them to cleaner, clearer water, did not seem to be getting them any nearer to Asgard. Eventually Loki began to swim so quickly that Thor was barely catching glimpses of his golden fins as he whipped around each corner, and though he shouted to him to slow down, the frustrated yell died on his lips when he nearly crashed into him around the last corner.

They had come to an enormous cavern fully submerged in water, but, similar to the Orchard of Idunn, it had the trick of resembling the surface world instead. While this cave was fully aware of its heavy stone walls, instead of a ceiling there was a chaotic peppering of stars, unfolding layer after layer above them in milky, glittering swirls that held every color imaginable between patches of liquid black. Thor stared mutely, unable to comprehend such a vision in a place so secret, dangerous, and claustrophobic.

“You sensed this place through magic, did you?”

Loki looked over his shoulder, but looked troubled instead of smug, as if he was not quite sure himself.

“That is a good enough theory, Odinson.”

Thor didn’t like him calling him that, especially at a time like this, but he bit his tongue. Loki swam towards one of the walls, and Thor could just about make out some sort of writing on them. With a quiet murmur to Mjolnir, he brought forth enough glow from her latticed head to illuminate the towering cavern.

The enormous walls were painted with the images of men and women - two-legged, surface-dwelling creatures. Each glyph was at least a hundred feet high, either intolerably hideous or unspeakably stunning as they engaged in feats of glory and cowers of shame. One figure stood above the rest, with two ragged wolves at his feet, a black bird on each shoulder, and one eye. Thor shuddered, and his waterproof skin began to prickle all over. He was so engrossed in the giant’s piercing one-eyed stare that Loki’s soft interruption of his thoughts made him jump.

“Look,” he said in Thor’s ear, laying a hand quietly on his shoulder. “You.”

Loki was pointing to a man holding a hammer that was clearly Mjolnir, locked in battle with an enormous serpent. The serpent’s coils squeezed life out of the man even as Mjolnir’s blow smashed the serpent’s skull into pieces, and there was viscous venom dripping crudely down the hammer-wielder’s neck.

Loki looked further up, and his eyes were gleaming.

“Now it all makes sense,” he said, with something akin to reverence, if Loki’s voice was capable of such an emotion. Thor forced his eyes away from the hammer-wielder to follow Loki’s gaze. The golden spires of Asgard were painted in unerring detail above the massive glyphs, disappearing into the false night sky. “A palace in the stars.”

“Our people are of the sea,” Thor said, his voice sounding strange in this bizarre place, “We always have been.

Sisters, sighed Mjolnir dreamily, Look at all my sisters.

Loki searched Thor’s face for a moment, and then, succumbing to a moment of exhaustion, lay his face against his neck. Thor held him about the waist, and breathed out slowly. As he did, his eyes raised again at the appearance of a glyph he had not noticed before. Half-hidden behind the throne of the one-eyed man was another; his face was lovely, his hair flaming red, and he held a basket of apples in one arm and a slender finger to his smirking lips. Thor let out a cry of recognition, and Loki raised his head to look around at what had disturbed him. By the time his eyes had reached the mural, the red-haired stranger had vanished.

The galaxy above the ocean was bright, living comfort. Loki lay on the crag of rock that Thor had crashed his fishing skiff into and gazed into the sky. He breathed through his throat and mouth while his gills fluttered uselessly and felt utterly strange. He could still taste the fruit’s juice and Thor’s heady flavor on his tongue, and wondered if he would ever stop tasting them. It felt branded there, that moment of heat and peace and safety and life. It was humming through every one of his capillaries and making his head spin. The pull downwards he had always felt unbearable desire for...the agitated whispers in quiet moments, the constant call of wheedling death had all ceased. He had never known an existence without these things. Now that he was free of them, land

and sea seemed rather small. Beautiful, pleasurable to be sure, but compared to those stars up above...

His thoughts were interrupted by a gentle splash of Thor breaking the surface nearby. Loki sat up to greet him and Thor pulled himself onto the rock and lay down with a weary sigh.

"Poor babe," Loki crooned as he tugged soaked locks of Thor's hair from his face, "Couldn't you sleep, either? I should not have shown you that mural."

"You didn't know it was there," Thor replied sullenly, and he squinted at the night sky as if the stars were too bright for him. "My father must know. It's no wonder he's so grim all the time."

"It isn't grim. That mural is a prescription of a glorious destiny. You and your people are gods of the cosmos...of the universe. Not just one ocean. Is the sea all you could care for?"

"The sea..." Thor trailed off as if the question wasn't even worth asking, and gave Loki a searching look to make sure he was serious. "The sea is life itself. She is warm and dangerous and beautiful and large. More manner of creature make the sea their home than ever made the mistake of crawling on land, and for good reason. This..." Thor gestured, half angry, half lost, at the expanse of black night and glowing pinpricks above them both. "This is nothing but cold empty death."

He closed his eyes, then, and Loki saw Thor as he first saw him for a moment; a beautiful, strange creature that had emerged from the depths of the ocean for him in the instant he had nearly given up. He ruminated that it was first sight when he had decided to own him; to trap and bind him. As if it was his destiny, or his right.

After a few deep, bracing breaths, Thor's lips moved, though his eyes remained closed, and a sound so quiet emerged from his throat that Loki did not realize it was song until it had grown into a throaty rumble. His voice when speaking was deep and pleasant, but when raised in song it reached soothing softnesses and nerve-thrumming depths that were as alien and strange as they were beautiful. The song was not in words, because words were not needed. As Loki listened to his voice and watched starlight dance on his skin the agitated uneasiness that his new immortality had brought him began to settle. For the moment, he latched himself to Thor's steady, stubborn solidity. For just that moment, he was utterly and completely still, and knew that Thor's side was the only place he belonged. When he was finished Thor opened his eyes, his face raw with the briefest shadow of shy uncertainty before he saw Loki's enraptured expression, and smiled.

"You liked it after all. I was afraid you would be disappointed after I refused you so many times."

"It was perfect," Loki answered, "It was better than I had hoped. It was mine."

Thor held out his arm, and Loki slid forward to rest against his chest. His nerves were buzzing with want; Thor's song and flavor and rich, salty scent made him want to bury himself inside of him until he could no longer think.

Later, he told himself, Patience. Wait until we take to the ocean that Thor finds so sweet and so comforting.

"Do not disappear into the stars," Thor growled after a moment. "I'm beginning to believe anything is possible for you, especially anything to do with wonder and terror." Loki paused, and then locked eyes with Thor with fierce and rare integrity.

"I *will* visit the stars. They're too close and too fascinating to prevent me from touching them. But

you will be at my side when I do. We will discover the cosmos together, whether we must be creatures of sea, land, or simply bright shining lights in the sky.”

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Several hundred years gave the two young water-gods more adventure and misadventure than they could accurately catalog. Mimir, happier in his Vanir residence than he ever had been in Asgard, wrote a book each year at the behest of his lord Freyr. When he was not singing the praises of his adopted people, he could be convinced from time to time to chronicle Asgardian exploits, though there were certainly uncouth patches of fact he would rather have left out.

The God of Thunder gradually learned to give up on stability and adapt his brother's taste for the truly wild, unknown, and unpredictable. The God of Mischief, as he quickly became known throughout the nine seas for his peculiar talents, seemed to learn very little other than how to appear and disappear exactly at the right moment. Since they shared a home and the care of the same royal parents, Asgard quickly forgot that the two were not brothers by blood. This made their frequent and blatant carnal activity a source of hushed and constant scandal that Odin endured in quiet fury and Frigga accepted with smiling serenity. Eventually, the city forgot too that this should have been wrong.

Loki often disappeared into the ocean for months at a time, and Thor had his more steadfast and loyal friends to occupy him when he was absent. They fought frequently, and loved ever fiercer for it. They were never once bored.

"You horrible, perfect creature," Thor sighed in Loki's ear after the birth of their second son. The first had not lived. "To think you were once a fisherman with *legs*, and the intent to snare me. Now you are whole and mine in every facet of your existence."

"Oh," Loki had breathed, exhausted, but his eyes glittering as he stroked the babe's downy fluff of golden hair, and the plump curve of his cheek that spoke far more of the father than the mother. "But I have so very many facets."

Thor held Loki by his swollen hips and laughed, as crude and joyful at seven hundred as he had been at five. A week later, Loki decided to return to earth.

Thor was drowsily perusing an old scroll of Loki's after a particularly large dinner. It was obscenely boring, cryptic language, all concerning cycles and rebirth and surface-dwellers and other nonsense he couldn't make head or tail of. Despite the texts' inadequacies, it had been a good night, and as he smiled suggestively at Loki sitting at his table of spells and potions, Loki smiled back with emphatic warmth.

"Have I told you that Odin has discovered I was once human?"

Thor blanched, and the scroll fell from his hand as he bolted upright. Loki's face was in his hands before he even realized he had been moving.

"How? When? Why did you not tell me sooner? He must be *furious*."

"Calm yourself," Loki replied, patiently peeling his palms from his cheeks, "He's actually quite pleased."

Loki shed his tail with a good deal less dramatic effect than when he gained it. He explained to Thor that he would be returning to the surface upon Odin's request, and when asked damnably *why*, he at first tried to wave it off as an affair that Thor would not understand. Thor aggressively disagreed, and through a combination of barking, violence, and stout stubbornness, he finally convinced Loki to explain.

"Odin and I have been scheming treason," he finally said, slow and careful. "If my work on the surface goes well, your father will become king, as he rightfully should."

Thor allowed this vagueness only when Loki swore on his own blood that he would return.

Loki took up residence in Thor's old cave and began living half on land, taking a daily mixture of chemicals and herbs that seemed to do nothing other than make him very ill. One evening while Thor was tending him, he demanded a vial of his blood. Though Thor bridled at the request, Loki insisted that it would be the only thing to make him well again. Reluctantly, he produced a sticky, hot jar for him sealed with black wax.

As soon as he had it in his hand, his illness seemed to fade, and without words he took the satchel he had stored away for his trip to the surface, and swam for it with such speed that Thor had to strain to keep pace with him. When he did surface, Loki was already on the shore of an icy, unforgiving landscape, the beach crusted in rime and the trees black against a dusk-gray sky beneath the moon.

Thor watched in horror as Loki writhed, convulsed, and then separated from his tail with slimy lack of ceremony, the pretty black flesh splitting apart to make way for his natural-born legs. His tail slipped into the water as little more than a collection of inky skin and dull gold floating on the mild waves. He pulled his limp lower half into a haphazard seated position, and, still panting with exhaustion, began pulling his old clothes out of the satchel, enjoying the novelty in having use for them again. Thor's glowered at him near-murderously, and Loki returned a grin that, while it was quite healthy, could not be called comforting.

"You knew this was coming, Thor."

"I have been telling you to refuse. If my father desires kingship so badly he can surely stick a knife in Aegir without using you for continental foolishness. You should have *listened* to me."

"Ah, Thor," Loki sighed, "One day you will learn that just because you do not wish for something does not mean it cannot happen. And just because *you* wished I would refuse does not mean that I wanted to."

Thor turned his impotent fury to the water, and gathered the bleeding tail into his arms. A moment passed, and Loki's voice went soft.



“Oh. No. Thor, don’t cry.”

“I’m keeping this,” Thor sniffed.

“Of course you are. It’s yours. Come here. Come closer and kiss me.”

Thor swam closer and lay the tail down carefully on the sand. He meant to look at Loki's face, but he was distracted by his legs. They were just as pale and perfectly formed as he had first seen them, dusted with brown sand in the moonlight. Loki took his face in both his hands and kissed him warmly, tenderly, with love and promise instead of bite or challenge.

"I will be back, you know."

Thor tightened his grip on Loki's legs, daring himself to believe that he would keep his oath.

"You have one hundred years to fulfill Odin's request."

"Nonsense. Odin has given me three."

"One. And if you contradict me again I will make it half that. If you are gone for any longer I will come to earth and hunt you down."

Loki's eyes flickered, and he nodded.

"One hundred years. You will see me then."

Thor remained in the surf holding the dead tail. Heat and bitterness rolled off of him, but not despair. He burned into his mind the picture of Loki's slender traveling-man figure wrapped in fur walking along the beach. With a glance of red and green eyes over his shoulder, he disappeared into the woods with a vial of blood strung around his neck, and a satchel of golden fruit over his shoulder.

Chapter End Notes

I feel, honestly, like I should say something meaningful and dramatic here, but all I can think of is "IT'S DONE." This is the longest complete fic I have ever written, and I am absolutely *boggled* that it was received the way it was - every time I get a new comment or kudos or hit on this I get a static shock of joy ranging from shivers to blitzed-out bliss.

You are all amazing, and I hope you enjoyed the conclusion. Thank you, truly, from the bottom of my mer-infested heart.

End Notes

[Unless indicated otherwise, illustrations are also by me - soltiana@tumblr.]

Works inspired by this one

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